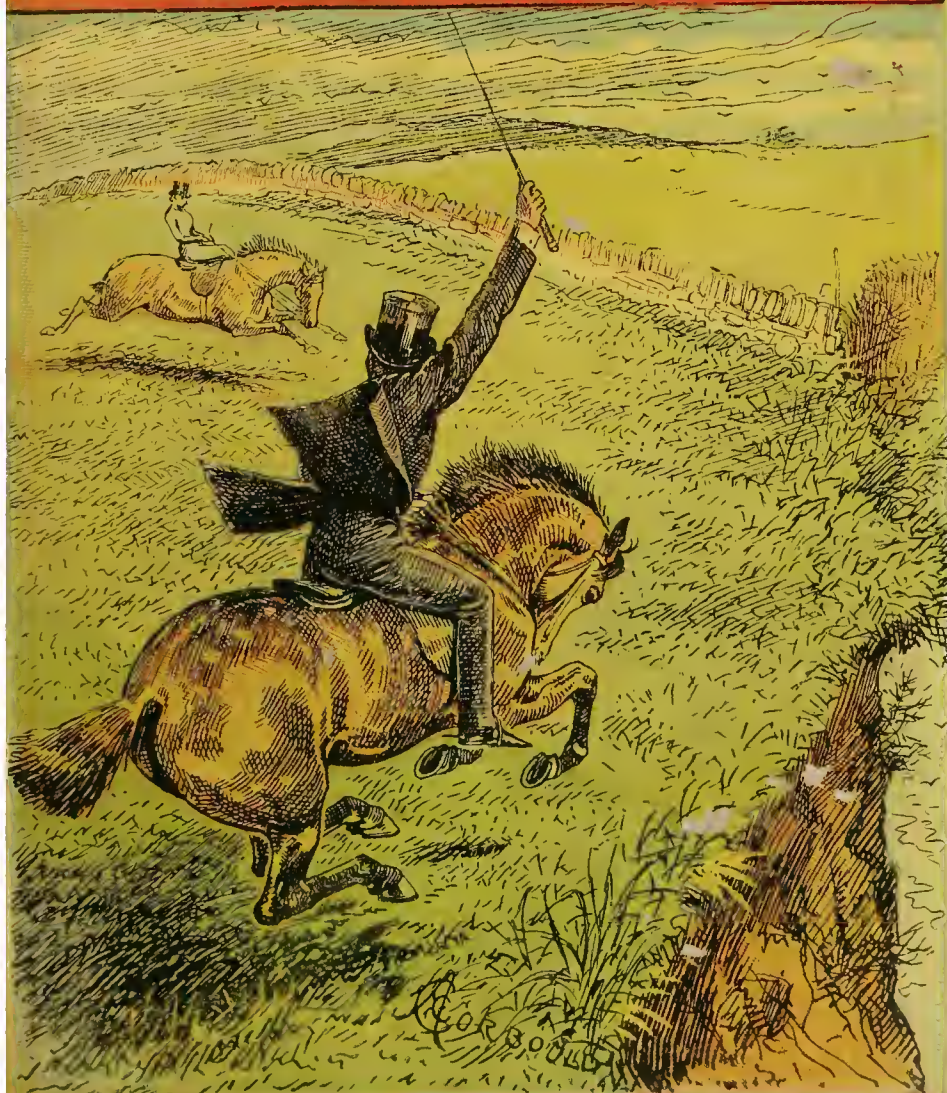


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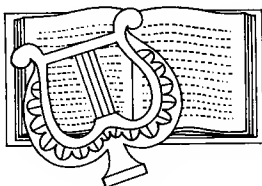
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PIGSKIN AND WILLOW.

CHAPTER I.

TREATS SLIGHTLY OF THE TOWN, AND INTRODUCES THE BARBER,
THE DOCTOR, AND THE DOCTOR'S MAN; ALSO DESCRIBES AN
IRREGULAR MATCH ACROSS COUNTRY.

LET us begin in what may be termed the Hibernian manner, and say that at Heatherthorp progress stands still. A many-gabled old town in one of the Ridings of Yorkshire, it had fallen into utter nothingness when the locomotive hissed down the Coach, but for the love of wholesome sport, which most of the year kept the inhabitants from rusting. Heatherthorp was a racing and cricketing town in that hot time when the shibboleth of the Radicals was "Old Sarum!" It is a sporting town, *pur et simple*, at this present writing, Manchester and manhood suffrage notwithstanding.

Yet, as may be divined, politics and polemics have never been altogether absent from Heatherthorp. Its tone, as becoms an old-world settlement which grows most of the eatables that are requisite for its sustenance, and confines its manufactures to articles easily "consumed on the premises," is Tory out-and-out. The few Quakers who abide in pretty semi-

PIGSKIN AND WILLOW.

detached villas at Heatherthorp, for the sake of its salubrity are a mild disturbance to its quiet—but so mild that their most violent demonstrations blend, so to speak, with the habitually calm demeanour of the place, just as a cawing rookery adds to the serenity of a summer's eve. Those same Quakers cause awakening tracts to be distributed at the races which are held once a year on the adjacent moor; they suffer annually (or did) in their goods and chattels, at the shrine of Mother Church; and they take the chair, in the person of their great gun—may you call a follower of George Fox a great gun?—at certain anti-capital punishment and irrepressible nigger meetings which are periodically held in a conventicle, the like of which for downright ugliness was perhaps never beheld. Their great gun, prim and precise Nathan Barjona, is not a Conservative save in the matter of his wine. With those fortunate creatures who have made the acquaintance of the unparalleled liquor, his port is a proverb. A former Chancellor of the Exchequer is one of Nathan's idols, but there is a limit to all idolatry. Nathan's is Gladstonian claret.

Progress, like poverty, meets with strange bedfellows. The person who daily takes Heatherthorp by the nose, and keeps its locks fashionably trimmed, is "Mr. Daniel Essom, Hairdresser and Hatter—Schools contracted for." He is variously known as "Mr. Essom," "Friend Daniel," and "Little Dan," and is a marvel. He is a barber of the conventional type, in so far that he is brisk, dapper, oily, pragmatical—but he is Yorkshire—has dwelt in cities—and he enunciates his opinions without fear or favour. He loves a bit of racing; he revels in the study of a complicated handicap; he has strong views on the breeding of blood stock and greyhounds; he bets;—but why attempt the vain task of enumerating his many other

characteristics ? By dint of attending the Fleet-Street forums an entire season, when he was a very young man, he picked up Radicalism, learnt to talk political economy, and to rail against church rates. Queer things to shake hands—Racing and Radicalism ; but in Daniel Essom's regard they were equal, and their community produced an eccentric result. His shop has always been the Tattersall's of Heatherthorp, thither flocking a racing *clientèle*, to rub shoulders with the parochially disaffected, the hungerers and thirsters after political emancipation, and the putters-down of church rates.

One of his sturdiest friends was Barjona, and yet the two opponents (the poles were not wider asunder) seldom parted company without breaking a lance on the subject of sport. When Sir Harry Sursingle's bay colt, Lightning (by Meteor out of Electricity) won the Derby—Sir Harry is Tory Member for the Riding of which Heatherthorp is a not unimportant parliamentary morsel—the vicar, who, it was subsequently whispered, smelt a rat, was quietly got out of the way, “to visit a distant parishioner,” and a celebrated society of change-ringers, hurriedly bidden to Heatherthorp to startle hill and dale with clanging, if unmelodious, news of the colt's victory. The grey steeple of St. Martin-the-Less fairly shook again as the ringers, specially primed for the occasion, “rang a peal of grandsire trebles consisting of 1867 changes”—for so the jolly clamour was described in the succeeding Saturday's “Bell”—and “the grandsire trebles” were at their very loudest when Nathan Barjona entered the shop of Mr. Daniel Essom. He was on his way to Meeting. It is perhaps unnecessary to observe that Essom had almost abjured suds that day, for the most part in favour of sherry and Lightning.

“Daniel,” said Nathan, “I'll trouble thee to shave me, it,”

—looking the operator's unusually bland and rosy visage curiously over—"thy feelings will permit thee."

"D——, that is, never mind my feelings, Mr. Barjona," brusquely replied Daniel, somewhat nettled at the quiet tone of sarcasm used by the querist; "I can shave, sir," tying a cloth somewhat roughly round his patient's throat; "I can shave, sir, and what is more, I have a nerve of iron—of i-ron, sir," giving the cloth an additional twist.

"Doubtless," replied the Quaker, who was nearly choking "thy muscles resemble the metal in question; but, unless thou desirest to be guilty of strangulation, exercise more care."

"Oh! it's all right," rejoined Dan.

He began the saponaceous process. Presently the dialogue was resumed.

"Art thou aware of the meaning of this unseemly clamour up at the steeple-house?"

"Well, not exactly."

"Has the parson been made a bishop?"

"Not that I know of."

"Is—do b-be less lavish of thy lather, Daniel—is the vicar about to journey to another portion of the vineyard, where the grapes hang in thicker clusters?"

"Can't say," replied Daniel, shortly, beginning to strop a razor with ominous fury.

"Thou art strangely obtuse this evening, friend Daniel!"

"Well, then," observed Daniel, speaking with great deliberation, as he proceeded to scrape his pertinacious interrogator's chin, "you remember, I dare say, that your principal objection to the rates last year was—pray don't speak, or I shall cut you,—was about the money paid to the ringers. You properly contended it was an illegal outlay, or, if legal, not fairly earned.

Very good; those musicians are afraid you may repeat your objection at the next vestry meeting, and they have met to-night to rattle off arrears. They don't expect to get through till midnight! You reside near the church——"

The Quaker could stand it no longer. Hastily wiping his face, he rushed from the shop.

"I think I had him there," soliloquised Dan, as he watched Nathan on his way to Meeting. "The old codger is sound enough on some points; but he never will understand what it is to land a 50 to 1 chance. Lightning, my boy, I never fancied your owner, but—you're a beauty!"

Our former doctor was a comely yet majestic specimen of an old-fashioned medical man. Mr. John Blake, M.D., had managed, during many years' residence amongst us, to accumulate a handsome fortune. Wearying of harness towards the close of a quiet and comfortable career, he, after holding solemn conferences with his two maiden sisters daily for something like twelve months, arrived at the conclusion that it was high time for him to retire. It cost the genial old gentleman no little regret to abandon patients who, with some rare exceptions, were personal friends; and on the other hand, the patients themselves were nearly inconsolable when they heard of his approaching departure. For he was not only about to give up the practice, but to leave the town "for good." A wish to renew amicable intercourse with a hitherto alienated branch of his family, and a desire to extend his researches in entomology (he was a mighty hunter of beetles and butterflies), caused him to select for his future home a cosy little cottage on the borders of the New Forest. Yet, the question passed from lip to lip, Why leave Heatherthorp at all? It is possible that but for old Barjona's beeswing, the principal reason for his bidding

adieu to a place so dear to him would have for ever remained a mystery. Over the mahogany of that worthy member of the Society of Friends, Doctor Blake revealed the secret.

"You see," observed he, after a silent space in their serious after-dinner chat, "my ways are rusty and old-fashioned. I have led the humdrum life of a mill horse for too many years to alter my pace now; and, what is more, I cannot complacently brook the rapid rate at which people travel nowadays. I long for mental as well as bodily rest. The age is too much in a hurry, Barjona, and I grieve to say that the honourable profession to which I belong is to some extent under its demoralising influence; therefore——"

"But what has all this rigmarole to do with thy leaving Heatherthorp? thou has' some bee i' thy bonnet, John Blake," sharply interrupted the Quaker.

"No bee at all, no bee at all, I assure you; but I am troubled."

"And thy concern is about——"

"My successor, Barjona. There, you know all! It is needful he be a young man—for Robson, my assistant, who stipulates to be turned over with the practice, is getting rather tottery,—and being a youngster, he is sure to have theories. I know; they all have. Why, Barjona, if I remained, his new-fangled notions would be the death of me. Fancy a mesmerist, or a spirit-rapper, or a teetotaller, or a believer in odic force, or a dabbler in homœopathy filling my shoes! The idea is horrible. There is no help for it. I must go." After another brief period of silence, which the Quaker sedately abstained from disturbing, the Doctor, in tones of resignation, resumed—

"I have arranged to be fairly away before he arrives; yet, if ——" and a gleam of comfort irradiated the old gentleman's

countenance, "as my London agents inform me, he has sporting tendencies, all may yet be well."

"Sporting tendencies, John Blake!" exclaimed the Quaker, "thou art surely mad!"

"No, I am not; I am very sane indeed. Not a great sportsman myself, I have sense enough to know that a man who can go tolerably straight across country, handle a gun, or take his part in the cricket-field, will not waste his time over moonshine theories. Heatherthorp is safe, if my successor—whom I am credibly informed is a man of undoubted ability—be likewise a sportsman."

It is unnecessary to observe that Nathan Barjona was horrified; but that mattered little to the Doctor, who, in due time, took his departure, and, as the practice of presenting testimonials obtained not with us, we refrained from claret jugs, tea services, and ormolu clocks. When he was gone, the name of his successor was imparted unto Heatherthorp, and, as gossips in little country towns have a wonderful knack of putting this and that together, a great many airy castles of conjecture thereupon sprang into existence. At the bar-parlour of the Sursingle Arms, one cold night towards the end of March, there was a general comparison of notes, and the decision arrived at, after a copious consumption of ardent spirits, was startling indeed.

Doctor Sutton, the new doctor, *had* "sporting tendencies." He had written to Martin Sillery, the landlord, and had engaged two loose boxes; he had corresponded with Daniel Essom with a view to being enrolled a member of the H. C. C. without loss of time; and, it was further ill-naturedly said, although he was now a very capable medical man, he had, before a cloud overcast the fortunes of his family in Smoke-

landshire, been the most extravagant and rackety scamp of his college. He was expected at Heatherthorp on the following day.

According to the railway guide, Heatherthorp Station is geographically identical with the town of that name. In reality, it is four miles distant. On the afternoon succeeding the evening just mentioned, two passengers alighted from the only express train which stops at the station. The younger and taller was Doctor Sutton; the elder and shorter, his man, Matthew Crisp. While Crisp attended to his master's luggage, the Doctor himself sauntered to a siding where a couple of nags were being released from a horse-box.

Doctor Sutton, the hero of this story (for we may as well make a clean breast about that), would have been considered handsome in a crowd of good-looking fellows of the grey-eyed, fair-haired type of British gentlemen, albeit there was nothing about him that suggested either an antique Apollo or a modern Guardsman. Standing upwards of five feet ten, and riding something like eleven stone, he looked from the crown of a head, well set upon serviceable shoulders, to the sole of a true-shaped, useful foot, as rare a man as one need wish to meet.

"I shall ride Kelpie into the town, Matthew (I presume the imaginative inhabitants call it a town?), and when you have seen to the disposition of the luggage, follow with the mare."

"All right, Mr. Arthur," replied Matthew, in the confidently familiar tones of a favourite dependent.

Kelpie, a splendid bay gelding, with black points, looked, after Matthew had removed his travelling gear and put him through a hasty toilet, the picture of what he really was—

"A hunter from Erin's turf and gorze,
A regular thoroughbred Irish horse,"

one **that** a lady might guide with a thread of silk, or a Jack Mytton put at "anything in reason"—or out of it.

Doctor Sutton leaped into the saddle, and Kelpie trotted off in the direction of the town.

"Niece bit of blood, that!" sententiously observed the porter, as he assisted Crisp with the luggage.

"Which?"

"Why, either, for the matter o' that," replied the porter, gratefully recollecting the Doctor's liberality.

"Young man," said Crisp, gravely putting down a heavy portmanteau, to add to the impressiveness of his remarks, "mak' no mistake about that. Bit o' blood! I should think they were! They're equal; hoss *and* rider. I've known 'em—Look here, I've known 'em ever since they wos foals! Bless your 'art, there's no more vice in 'em than there's—civility in the driver of this 'ere 'bus."

A somewhat cutting figure of speech, provoked by the driver's impatiently "wishing to know *when* he was to get back to He' thorp?"

Crisp mounted the mare, and went off at a gentle canter in pursuit of his master. One of those sunsets which sometimes grace the lamblike temper of March was flooding the heathy moor with rosy light. Crisp, however, had no eye for the beautiful, and his habitually sour nature was decidedly not mollified by his wordy encounter with the driver of the Sursingle 'bus. So he rode on moodily. In time, this cross mood gave place to another, rather more complaisant. He was hungry—anger may be provocative of peckishness—and a glimpse of the sinuous Wimple, gleaming like a fiery serpent from amid the dun-green verdure, oddly enough, chimed with his humour. His thoughts wandered to "March browns" and a dish of

savoury trout. When he reached the brow of a hill which commanded a view of a considerable portion of Sir Harry Sursingle's demesne, his amiability, intensified no doubt by his gradual approach to Heatherthorp, and the consequently nearer neighbourhood of dinner, had increased to such an extent, that he broke out into a soliloquy. Like all such exercises in real life, and none on the stage, it was divertingly incoherent.

"Should not care to drive a machine along this road at night in the middle of winter; rum line of country to hunt, Mr. Arthur, if you have time to put on pink again, my lad, and if you han't, you'll make time, I'll bet; breeding will be served. There's nowt sae true as that—breeding will be served.—Sir Harry's place, I suppose: lots of cover under them red roofs for a fellow gov'ment wanted to shorten by a head; shouldn't wonder but it's been used for cover too, in the jolly old days when a Christian couldn't call his life his own for ten minutes together. Fine grounds and lots of timber, and something like a slope to the river side; but, Lord! everywhere else the banks are deuced ugly—like cliffs a'most."

He then glanced in the opposite direction.

"New place—wonder who lives there?—Sir Harry's neighbour, old Wilson, I suppose. I heard he was living about here, worth a sight o' money; but when he first came into Smoke-landshire——. Well, Mr. Arthur, if so be you have to doctor the whole country-side, it won't be Widow Malone that'll stand the work. Will it, old lady?"

As the old lady did not vouchsafe a reply, Crisp was about to resume his journey, when, looking forward, he suddenly pulled up, and in an agitated tone gave vent to an ejaculation which would not look pretty in print.

Only near the two mansions which had attracted Crisp's

attention had any attempt been made to carry the grace of landscape gardening down to the river's brink ; elsewhere, as he had forcibly put it, the sides of the moorland stream were "deuced ugly."

At the foot of the hill stood a bridge which spanned the Wimple ; beyond this, winding away to the left, stretched the road to Heatherthorp, engirt on each side with a wall of loose stones. But one portion of the hard-featured turnpike, from the bridge to a point about a quarter of a mile beyond, was relieved by trees, a clump of Scotch firs. Thence, to the visible extremity of the road, there was nothing but the naked stone wall, the boundary of a huge piece of moorland, almost as destitute of vegetation as the wall itself. About a mile to the right of the road stood a second stone wall, which, parallel with the first, terminated at the roughest, steepest, and most dangerous part of the Wimple side, a cliff-like bank, shaggy at the top as a lion's mane, perforated with rabbit-holes, and patched here and there with bunches of whins and bracken.

Well might Matthew Crisp be terrified out of his habitual stolidity ! Well might he wriggle nervously in the saddle, breathe short, talk to himself in hoarse whispers, and otherwise act like one possessed ! Well might he shift his glance hurriedly from the furthestmost point of the road to the grim bit of bank-side ! He saw a young lady, mounted on a chestnut horse, charge the stone wall, and then tear along at a fearful pace, and as straight as a gun-barrel in the direction of the bank just mentioned. She was evidently a clever horsewoman, but mere skill could avail her little with a steed that was superior to all control. Only the remote chance of the maddened horse's shying again, and swerving out of the course he was then taking would save her from being dashed over the bank.

She held on bravely, and poor Matthew, apparently the sole spectator of her peril, broke into a cold sweat. His silent horror changed to the wildest excitement as he caught sight of another equestrian, who, likewise leaping the stone wall a little beyond the first, swept on in the same direction as the runaway.

"Mr. Arthur, by G——!" he ejaculated, in a sort of subdued shriek. "And going it like a house on fire. Haud on, man—haud on! Kelpie's short of work. He'll niver stay at that pace. My *dear* boy, nobbut be careful! But it is a pound to a penny that Kelp outstrides that chestnut. Pick your ground, Mr. Arthur, and——"

Matthew Crisp, out of breath with agony, said no more. The crisis of that terribly earnest match was at hand. By leaping the obstacle at the point which he had chosen, the Doctor had secured the best of the going. Kelpie and the frightened chestnut were lying wide of each other, each converging to the same point, and the Doctor improving his position at every stride.

It was a splendid struggle across country, and the prize—a woman's life! The Doctor had a briefer distance to travel than his companion in peril; but that advantage was neutralized by the nature of the ground. Whilst the chestnut was thundering away down-hill, he for a few strides had to pound along against the collar. Here the splendid powers of Kelpie were made manifest. The gallant gelding charged the hill with a resolution that might have been human, and Crisp's prediction that he would "outstride that chestnut" seemed more than probable.

The sun, setting redly behind Sursingle Manor, shed its last rays on the exciting scene. More apparent to the Doctor than to Matthew (often and often the Doctor talked of it afterwards)

was the white rigidity of the girl's face; and striking to him notwithstanding the awful whirl of the moment, was the grace of her seat, as horse and rider, clear and sharp as a *silhouette* against the warm sky were lit up by the farewell rays of the March sun.

On went the two horses stride for stride, until they came to a point where the chestnut must either take the second stone wall or be hurled over the bank. Crisp ground his teeth in the agony of his suspense.

A shout rang through the air—it was his master's voice; he saw the Doctor lift his whip—once, twice, thrice—he was intuitively conscious, although he could not make it out, that the persuaders were being simultaneously applied; he saw that Kelpie responded gamely to the cruel but necessary punishment; and, in one moment more, he knew that the experiment had been triumphantly successful, the chestnut, swerving, had safely charged the wall, with Kelpie by his side.

“O Lord! O Lord!” groaned Crisp, with a great sigh of relief, “they had precious little to spare.”

Doctor Sutton had won the match. But did the victory bring no ache with it? He had saved the life of lovely Kate Wilson, sole daughter of the retired ironmaster. He, journeying soberly to Heatherthorp, on quietly professional thoughts intent, had probably met his fate.

The reader has surely filled in the sketch. If he has failed, *I* cannot hope to do justice to Kate Wilson's portrait. Who could? It is left to us both then to dimly imagine the graceful *abandon* of her beauty when the Doctor received her—sunny hair dishevelled and hazel eyes closed—fainting in his arms. To imagine the quiet charm of the ride home in the

gloaming. We can do no more. There was that in the picture which neither pen nor pencil could express.

That night, while Matthew, who would never trust the awful responsibility to meaner hands, did up the horses, he gave vent to his feelings.

“Sssss—it’s all over, Kelpie, old boy. You have got a Mistress. Mr. Arthur is settled for good and all. Sssss—when a big fellow of thirty-two speaks soft to a woman, and blushes and looks awkward like a schoolboy—Sssss—it don’t require a horacle to tell how the wind blows. Sssss—and she—Sssss—she’s a beauty, a picter, but, by George, she’s artful! I heard her—*over hoss*—I heard her. ‘You call him Kelpie, Mr. Sutton. Kelpie’s a kind of fairy is it not? What a pretty name for a hoss.’—Sssss—‘Dear old Kelpie!’ If ever Mr. Arthur wished hisself a hoss it was then. ‘Dear old Kelpie!’ says she, ‘you helped to save my life, and we must be friends!’ AND THEY WILL. And he, poor fellow, looked delighted; he could not see she was sentencing him to transportation for life wi’ that rosy neb of hers. Ah! well, it might be a deal worse—*over hoss*.”

Dr. Sutton had won his first match across country. And—
had not she?

CHAPTER II.

TREATS OF CERTAIN PRELIMINARIES TO A MEMORABLE GAME AT CRICKET, CONCERNING WHICH CLUB SCORE-BOOKS AND LOCAL REPORTERS ARE SILENT; AND SHOWS THAT IF DOCTOR SUTTON HAS WON "HIS MATCH FOR LIFE," HE HAS YET TO RECEIVE THE STAKES.

SUMMER reaches us so late in the year we can generally depend upon gracing the Feast of St. Grouse with the last of the strawberries. A dainty privilege this, and one which should have long since stirred the lyre of the Heatherthorp Anacreon. Owing to this condition of things our cricket campaign seldom begins until at least a month after that in the sunny south. The season of the Doctor's arrival was capricious, and he therefore abode several weeks amongst us before he got the chance of scandalising his patients by a display of sporting tastes. He could not hunt; he did not care to angle; it was early for otters; and goody sports came not his way. Indeed, female archery was still a long way off being a Fine Art at Heatherthorp, and a rage for croquetry (which everybody knows is a muscular form of coquetry of the deadliest description) had not yet revolutionized our little corner of the Riding. Meanwhile he was progressing famously with his practice, and Molly Malone continued in constant work; while correspondingly Matthew Crisp was kept fully employed, and had scarcely any leisure for practising on *his* account—at the bar of the "Sursingle Arms."

Not that the Doctor's path was all rose-leaves. There was a thorn here and there, and bonny Kate Wilson was the sharpest of these. Her clear hazel eyes, ingenuous countenance, lithe figure, and deliciously fresh manner, were seldom absent from his memory for long together. He was in love; and although an indefinable something whispered that she rather looked upon his silent devotion with an eye of indulgence, he longed, like a gushing boy of eighteen, for a more satisfying proof of her favour.

He had never been a shunner of drawing-rooms, and he knew, or fancied he knew, much of woman's ways; but Kate perplexed him. This lovely Yorkshire lass, so brimful of bounding life, had a spice of devil in her, which, while it gave her an air of charming piquantry far removed from vulgar fastness, kept her from betraying herself, and him at arm's length. Alas! he was blind—and for stone-blindness commend us to your lover who, ere his affliction, was remarkable for more than an ordinary share of common sense. An album-filling lover is not blind at all, but cross-eyed, because, for every admiring glance he vouchsafes the object of his adoration, he bestows another on himself.

Had Kelpie been gifted with Christian speech, he could have let his master into a secret worth knowing. It was to him "the sweetest Kate in Christendom" symbolically told her love, making no more account of Matthew Crisp, who was the dumb sharer of the girl's eccentric confidence "than," as he afterwards put it, "a lump of wood." These almost one-sided interviews came about in this wise:—The mare did all the "doctoring," and therefore Crisp was ordered to see that Kelpie did not become "as big as a bullock" for want of exercise. Whene'er he took his

rides abroad he was sure to meet Miss Wilson mounted upon a bay four-year-old, which, by the Doctor's extra professional advice, had supplanted the runaway chestnut.

"Good morning, Matthew," said she to him, in a cheery voice, as they "accidentally" encountered each other on the ever-to-be-remembered road to the railway station one brisk forenoon in May, "and good morning to *you*, old fellow," addressing Kelpie in endearing tones. "I hope they use you well at Doctor Sutton's. By-the-by, how is the Doctor?"—then without waiting for a reply, she rattled along—"Did dear old Kelpie recollect this road then? Did he remember the day when he—and his master—saved somebody's life? eh, old darling? Good-bye, old Kelp," touching his patient Roman nose with her pretty pouting rosy lips—"Good-bye," twisting some wild flowers about his ears—"I think, Matthew, you said Doctor Sutton was quite well. He will not have forgotten, I dare say, that we—that is papa, expects him at dinner this evening. Adieu, old Kelpie!" and off she cantered.

If she could only have heard Matthew's comments now! Listen to them, and imagine you see him watching her disappear in the distance.

"Of all the artful ones I *ever* see, she *is* the artfullest. She doubles like a hare; and *seems* to go so straight, too. Will it be a long run, I wonder?"

"Now for the rest o' the farce. Mr. Arthur'll hear me come into the yard: absent-like, thinking nobody sees him, he'll collar these flowers. Then he'll ask, quite off hand and in a don't-careish sort of voice, where I've been. Very good; I tell him I've met *her*; he will say, still gammonin', he don't care twopence, 'Oh indeed!'—and, to finish up, he'll order Kelpie to be saddled this evcnin', and off he'll bolt to dine at

Wimpledale Place. Oh! Mr. Arthur! Mr. Arthur! what *will* it end in?"

There was a touch of real sadness in his voice as he uttered these words. Matthew might have been Adam and Doctor Sutton Orlando for the affection which the old man-servant bore his young master.

"What would Tim Wilson say to all this if he knew? Happen he would not like it."

This query, the conclusion of his audible remarks addressed to vacancy, was more pregnant than even Crisp supposed. Like many men who had risen from nothing, Timothy Wilson, Esq., in early life an industrious puddler, was inordinately proud; and his pride was that of the *parvenu*. Incapable himself of advancing to a loftier position in society, for free and independent constituencies had yet to awaken to the high parliamentary claims of Iron, the darling of his household, his only daughter Katherine, was the mainspring of his schemes of ambition.

He would have rejoiced at the opportunity of selling his daughter—at the altar—to a gentleman of good family. He had not shown his hand yet, but it came to pass towards the end of May that both Kate and the Doctor saw it.

Early one Wednesday morning (Wednesday, I should remark, is the market day at Heatherthorp) there might have been observed assembled in front of Daniel Essom's shop a group of townfolk eagerly reading a handbill purporting to have been issued by the H. C. C. and bearing the signature of the honorary secretary of that celebrated club. It was proposed to inaugurate the season—set forth the bill—with a home-and-home match between the Heatherthorp eleven and a crack team selected from Shipley-on-Wimple and its district. Admirers

of the noble game who have gained their experience at Lord's or the Oval have no conception of the fervid animosities which pervade a home-and-home match in and about our Riding. For the nonce the cricket ground is changed into an Ashby-de-la-Zouch, and the opposing elevens into companies of fierce knights, thirsting for each other's—wickets. Such matches are worth any number of those bloodless trials of skill played on "scientific" grounds.

On the afternoon of the day Miss Wilson told Crisp his master was expected to dine at Wimpledale Place, Doctor Sutton was returning home from his rounds, when, to his surprise, he was accosted by Daniel Essom, who with a face of preternatural gravity begged him "step into the shop."

"You will pardon me, Doctor," said Daniel when he had summarily dismissed the boy and carefully closed the shop-door, "for stopping you so suddenly on your way home. No; it's nothing to do with my pulse. I am quite well, thank you. The fact is we have a committee meeting of the club to-night, and—I am a bad hand at beating about the bush, Doctor,—have I your consent to tell them you will play with us in our match against Shipley?"

"I—Mr. Essom! why, cannot you complete your eleven without *me*? I have not touched a bat for goodness knows how long. Besides, how do *you* know I play at all?"

"Never heed that now, Doctor," rejoined Daniel, smiling; "we want you to play!"

"I expect that old ass, Crisp, has been wagging his long tongue," muttered the Doctor, and then he added aloud—"I perceive you, at any rate, are determined that I shall shock the sensibilities of my serious patients. Well, tell your committee

I won't see them in a dilemma. If they want a stop-gap I will play."

Daniel, as delighted as though one of his long shots had come down to evens, warmly thanked the Doctor, and the latter departed, speculating as he went as to what his patients would think when they saw him in his new character.

On reaching home he duly enacted the farce as Crisp had foretold, and leaving word he was not to be troubled except in a case of unusual importance, turned Kelpie's nose towards Wimpledale Place.

Another guest had been bidden to the mahogany tree of Timothy Wilson, Esq., in the person of Mr. Reginald Woodridge, the ambitious cadet of a family that had recently espoused the mining interest. With the help of the remnant of a respectable patrimony he had been thrown into old Wilson's way, and he now appeared before the world in the novel character of iron-master's apprentice. He was a conventional "swell," but by no means a bad specimen of the class. Kate liked him. He rode fairly, played at reading some of her favourite authors, and, though his method was neither as polished as Mario's, nor as pure as Reeves', he could sing with taste. She always looked forward to his coming with pleasure for he brightened up their dull drawing-room wonderfully; but she dreamt not that he had been selected by her father for her husband, and that he himself was anything but adverse to the arrangement.

She shone resplendently that evening, for she was happy. In all her airy *badinage* Woodridge was with her, for he was cunning at most kinds of verbal fence; but the Doctor, slower of speech, and lacking utterly that conversational small change so useful in society, was ill at ease. He began to dislike fluent

Mr. Woodridge, especially as there arose, with his dislike, a suspicion that he was being talked down.

For some time the discomposure of Doctor Sutton was unobserved by Kate, but when she saw it she flushed with genuine anger, and her anger at length concentrated itself on the Doctor, "for being such a fool." Anomalously enough her thought assumed this shape because she loved the man. When she left the room, Mr. Woodridge attending her to the door, the Doctor took wine freely, and felt equal to anything.

"By the way, Doctor," observed the host, after Kate had gone, "you are a cricketer, I believe? Do you play with Heatherthorp against Shipley on the first of next month?"

"I have not decided whether I shall or not," replied the Doctor. "Essom, the secretary, asked me this very evening if I would play, and I gave him a conditional promise."

"Ah; you a cricketer, Doctor!" interposed Woodridge; "really, I should hardly have given you credit for enjoying such a game."

"Nevertheless, I play," shortly rejoined the Doctor.

"Averages good?" inquired Woodridge.

"Moderate," replied the Doctor.

"Come, come, Doctor! be careful, you know; we have heard a far different story of your abilities," put in the host.

"Ha, ha, ha! This is delightful!" laughed Woodridge; "we shall be antagonists. A Montague and a Capulet.—Our smelting furnaces are near Shipley, Doctor, as you may know, and I, like yourself, have been asked to play."

"I see nothing in the subject to excite such hilarity," said the Doctor, with extraordinary stiffness, "unless"—his manner hardening as he went on—"unless you would like to make it a Montague and Capulet affair in right down earnest."

"Agreed!" promptly replied Woodridge, slightly nettled at the Doctor's tone; nothing would give me greater pleasure: my score beats yours—for a pony."

"For a hundred, if you choose!" exclaimed the Doctor.

"For a hundred be it, then," quietly replied Woodridge, and the bet was booked.

"I think we might now rejoin Miss Wilson," suggested the host, who had a holy horror of all kinds of gambling, whist at sixpenny points excepted.

"Immediately, Mr. Wilson," said the Doctor. "How are we to decide? On the match, if it be played out; on the first innings if it be drawn?"

"Precisely," replied Woodridge. "And now, if you please, Mr. Wilson, let us join Kate."

"Kate!" muttered the Doctor, with set teeth. "How ready he has got her name. He could not use it more familiarly if he were her brother or her——"

Clearly our hero was in a bad way.

The rest of the evening passed like a dream, so far as he was concerned. Old Wilson droned out his platitudes about the bad state of trade, the foreign policy of the country, the parish rates, and similar lively topics, until the Doctor, through making believe to listen, fell into a state of coma, and the other inhabitants of the room seemed miles away. He had a vague consciousness, after he had bidden some mechanical adieux and was thundering along the road to Heatherthorp with the cold night wind blowing upon his face, that Kate's manner had been chillily distant! that Woodridge had treated him with intolerable hauteur; and that he, Arthur Basinghall Sutton, was a well-developed fool.

Kelpie's coat steamed like the witches' caldron in "Macbeth"

when the Doctor reached home. Throwing the reins to Crisp, he said to that patient functionary—

“Do up the horse smartly, Mat, and then come to me.”

“All right, Mr. Arthur!” replied Matthew, wondering what the deuce was in the wind.

In half an hour the pair were closeted together, and ten minutes subsequently Matthew was crossing the yard with a lantern, to his dormitory over the stables.

“Whew!” he whistled, prolonging the note in a most expressive manner. “What can the boy be driving at? I’ve touted a hoss in my time, but never a cricketer. Never mind, I’ll do it.”

That night Doctor Sutton dreamt that he was playing a brilliant innings, and had but a single run to obtain to win his wager, when, putting “one up,” it was taken by Kate Wilson who was fielding point!

CHAPTER III.

SHOWS HOW MATTHEW CRISP PLAYED THE PART OF A TOUT,
ADEQUATELY ACCOUNTS FOR DR. SUTTON’S SUDDEN DEPARTURE
FROM HEATHERTHORP, AND STEALS SUNDRY LEAVES FROM THE
EPISTOLARY CORRESPONDENCE OF MISS WILSON.

IT goes against the grain to own that one’s hero is sometimes mean; but a stern regard for truth demands such an admission. Even the sturdy old fellow who in days gone by had officiated as a kind of sporting nurse to the Doctor, and who, because he had taught him the A B C of woodcraft,

horsemanship, and cricket, was prouder of him and loved him better than aught else on earth,—even Crisp was of this opinion, having detected him in the commission of what he considered was an act of meanness. Not that he would have hinted as much to a living soul. Nay, he would have felt excessively disposed to knock that man down who had dared to suggest anything of the sort within his hearing. As it was, he went to bed oppressed with serious misgivings, and rose next dawn with a face too long almost for the bit of cracked mirror he shaved by. He could not drive the previous night's conversation out of his mind, and, his frequent wont when Kelpie was out of the way, he set about talking the matter over with himself.

“What need he fash himself about this Woodridge? Is it for him to care about the jaekanape's style, I'd like to know? If anybody had told me Mr. Arthur would ha' done it—why I'd ha' said they lied, that's all. What's a hundred sovereigns?—well, may be, plenty to lose—yet, hang it—I have put something away for my keep when I am thrown up and not able to earn it—and I'd ha' stood half the bet myself.”

“There's a woman at the bottom of this; a woman with ways that'd make a Methody parson forget his class; and Mr. Arthur's just mad. He tramped the room last night like a tragedy-actor.

“Then all this lang-winded rigmarole! As if I could not see through it. It's the knotted end o' the lash that makes the whip crack; he kept back his orders about this Woodridge chap to the last.”

Crisp's stable duties terminated, he departed on his mission, designedly lingering on his way at Essom's. He found that brisk little sportsman in the best of spirits.

“Ah! Crisp, is that you? Odd; I have just this moment

had the honour of a call from your master, who has promised to play in the match. What do you think of that, eh?"

"H'm," inarticulately replied Crisp.

"We shall have a glorious battle," continued the glowing Hon. See.,—"an engagement worthy of heroes; and, by Jove, we must beat them, too. We are ancient enemies, Shipley and Heatherthorp, and have fought for supremacy for, let me see, six years running. Up to the present it's a tie."

"H'm," remarked Crisp.

"Sir Harry Sursingle has given his patronage—which is pretty good as far as it goes—and has promised to bring a numerous party from the Manor—which is considerably better. Old Wilson is sure to come, for one of the Shipleyites, a rather clever gentleman player called Woodridge, is visiting at the Place. And it's any odds on old Tim's pretty daughter coming to see the young fellow distinguish himself."

"H'm," grimly observed Crisp.

"But I say, Matthew," queried Essom, with a merry chuckle, "what will the correct people say when they behold the Doctor performing in flannels?"

"And who are the correct people, pray?" inquired Crisp.

"Why, you know,—the saints, the pharisees,—the brethren. Old Barjona told me no longer since than yesterday, 'that he considered Doctor Sutton to be a notably discreet member of his profession,—a youth who was by no means prone to indulge in the sports of the profane.' (Which was a dig at me, you see, Crisp—ha! ha!) Miss Priscilla Cardmums, who, by-the-bye, is rising forty, collector and treasurer to the dispensary, manager of the soup kitchen, and the Lord knows what besides——"

"Well," interrupted Crisp.

"Oh, nothing," rejoined Essom, with a comic air of assumed indifference—"only she *has* informed her especial friends that 'Doctor Sutton's devotion to the noble charity (meaning the dispensary) which, under Providence, she so unworthily administers, is a rare and beautiful instance of Christian self-abnegation.' Then there's Wobbleton, the pious brewer, and Bell, the Wesleyan pork butcher, they——"

"Psh—aw!" exclaimed Crisp, an expression of scorn overspreading his features, "Doctor Sutton is yabble to stand it all Mr. Essom, and have an answer ready for them, too, if it's required. But I am forgetting my errand. He wants a new bat. Who provides your cricket things?"

"The umpire, Golightly; anybody will tell you where he lives," replied Essom.

It may be questioned whether, if at that moment Matthew Crisp had picked up one of the most precious notes ever issued by the Governor and Company of the Bank of England, the find would have given him sincerer pleasure than the information imparted by Essom. Crisp and Golightly had been chums years before; had together played in those famous money matches "a pound a man," which are *not*, alas, recorded in the Chronicles of Lillywhite; and had together emulated the bibbing bouts of Tam o' Shanter and Souter Johnny.

"Jack Golightly!" muttered Crisp, when fairly out of the barber's hearing. "Then it's touting made easy. A strong scent, a straight run, and a speedy kill."

The inspirer of this fervid and somewhat mixed metaphor lived in the heart of a tumbledown wynd accessible alike from the hilly high-street and the side of the river. By trade he was a shoemaker, that is to say, he eked out a livelihood by

cobbling cricketers' shoes, sewing cricket-balls, "lapping" bat-handles, and repairing pads. In short, he was a highly useful, if not a precisely ornamental artist in leather and caoutchouc. By inclination, and annual appointment (to say nothing of inherited right), he was umpire, almost parent, of the Heatherthorp team, but when not engaged with the lapstone or in the cricket ground, he was either poaching, educating greyhounds, following the Heatherthorp hunt—on foot,—plunging near the source of his native stream in pursuit of the wily otter, or defying snowflakes and bitter nor'-easters in his search for seafowl about the sands and marshes of the Wimple-mouth. Five years Crisp's elder, Time had dealt gently with him. His hair was white as a gull's breast, but his clear blue eyes yet possessed the sparkle of youth. He was yet as straight as a young larch, and though he could not vault over a five-barred gate with the activity of his teens, his robust limbs had more nimble endurance in them than those of many a younger man.

Guided by a curly-headed lad, who appeared delighted with the task (for the umpire was extremely popular with the juveniles—Young Heatherthorp regarding him as the incarnation of cricket wisdom), Crisp, after successfully avoiding painful contact with a miscellaneous accumulation of livestock suggestive of field sports, passed under a lintel ornamented with a caged sky-lark that was joyously carolling upon a fresh turf, and found himself face to face with his old friend.

"Why, Jack——!"

"Why, Mat——!"

And thereupon the floodgates of their eloquence opened, and a stream of homely North Riding talk, pure and undefiled, co-

fluently gushed forth. The worthies had not met for something like a dozen years, so when each had satisfied the other of his movements during that period, both must needs revive old recollections, and, in spirit, handle the bat, "and show how fields were won." No more work for that day. With the sun shining as it always shines in May madrigals, and rarely in reality during the ficklest of months—knowing there was honest ale to be had "within easy walking distance" (as the advertisers say), it was only natural that the veterans should simultaneously fall mightily athirst. Copious were the amber libations, all a-foam, which they poured upon the shrine of Friendship. What though the floor they trod was sanded, the table they sat by nothing but naked deal, the drinking vessels they lipped the commonest delft, the weed they inhaled a German production, and the churchwardens they smoked—long as a Doncaster hotel bill in the Leger week—of the most primitive fashion, it was an out-and-out Yorkshire encounter, rough and hearty, and could not have been pleasanter had it occurred in a palace. When the tales of their youth began to flag, Crisp, remembering his mission, considered it high time to open fire.

"The Doctor," began he—"I suppose you know he plays for Heatherthorp, John—bade me get him a new bat: one that'll drive, you know."

"Ay," cynically answered Golightly, "and when he's got it, he'll happen want a pair of arms to drive wi' "

"Bide and see," rejoined Crisp, "bide and see. However, you must pick him one that'll suit. And now, tell me, Jack, what kind of a match is this likely to be? Yon barber fellow is up i' the skies about it, and says you'll win; but I was told i' Shipley"—this, it may be remarked, was an atrociously wicked

fabrication—"that the public will be sure to lay seven to four against you, when they see the Shipley team take the field. And they do likewise say i' Shipley"—fabrication number two—"that a swell colt of theirs, a Mr. Woodridge, is a wonder."

Golightly smoked on with an expression of ineffable contempt while Crisp was romancing, and then drily observed—

"Mat, have ye lived and knocked about all these summers and winters 'ithout knowing that Consate is the worst player of any game that ever toed a mark. Shipley! Woodridge!—rubbish!"

"But look here, Jack," interrupted Crisp, deprecatingly.

"Don't talk to me," replied his crony, thoroughly roused, "about their clever Mr. Woodridge. I've seen him play. He came down to the ground yesterday, and got me to fetch him a bowler for an hour's practice. I fettled him with a bowler—one of *my* colts. He knocked the ball all over the shop."

"Then he can hit?" observed Crisp.

"Hit! a' course he can; and so can any bit lad skelp 'em when the bowling's made to order," replied Golightly. "Didn't I tell ye I *fettled* him with a bowler? He was bound to hit. He could not miss 'em. He did ask me, afterwards, if this colt o' mine, Ashton, was our best form!"

"And what do you say?" interrogated Crisp.

"Say," repeated Golightly; "why, yes, a' course. What should I say? And the lad Ashton is our best form—when he likes. Only, you see, we had a conversation together, and he didn't like! I think it served Mr. Woodridge right for wanting to *spy* into the enemy's country. What think *ye*?"

"Cert'nly," replied Crisp; "but tell me, how does he play?"

"I can tell you how he doesn't play—and that's with a straight stick," responded Golightly, contemptuously. "He either pulls one to leg, or steps out to a short-pitched one. He's over-partial to leaving home for me. I am a long way out of my reckoning if he can stand before some of our bowling."

Hereupon Crisp ceased from touting, and the couple became affectionately convivial. The shades of evening were falling over the town as he trudged off in the direction of the Doctor's residence. The news he carried was of so weighty a nature that it affected his legs, which moved about in a curiously undecided manner. But although his brain was manifestly overladen his heart was light, and he lifted up his voice in song. Sinister must have been the final hob-nobbing of John Golightly and Matthew Crisp, otherwise the latter would not have informed the peaceable inhabitants of Heatherthorp that the snaring of a hare was his delight on a shiny night in the season of the year. He knew he was rather "gone," and had sense enough to put his head under the pump before venturing into the presence of his master.

The interview was brief, for the Doctor, speedily discovering the cause of Crisp's unusual garrulity, possessed himself of the information he brought, and dismissed him for the night.

Our hero was up bright and early next morning, and leaving a note for his assistant Robson, intimating that it would be necessary for the writer to be absent for a few days, surprised the driver of the Sursingle omnibus by climbing into one of the box seats of that extraordinary vehicle about three-quarters of an hour before the time advertised for the up-train to leave

Heatherthorp Station. The impression left with Thomas, the said driver, with old Barjona, who was doing his regular morning constitutional, and with early-rising Heatherthorp generally, was that Doctor Sutton had been suddenly called away to assist at an important consultation; but impressions of the like nature are more frequently erroneous than not, and in the present instance they were very wide of the mark indeed.

To what straits, and the display of what eccentricities, will not love, morbid sensitiveness, and incipient jealousy reduce a Christian gentleman! He was intuitively certain that his absurd wager with Woodridge had been made the subject of more than one conversation at The Place; he ground his teeth when he thought that perchance he and his vagaries had given rise to gentle laughter, and—what pray? He might be wrong, but he felt sure that Woodridge was his rival, and no rival should crow over him, therefore he must make a mighty effort to win his wager. He was now on his way to “a public trial” of his cricket capabilities. In plain English, he had induced a friend to include him in an Eleven that was to play at a town some hundred miles south of Heatherthorp, in which contest he had determined to figure *incog*.

And how fared it with Kate the while? Pleas of pressing professional engagements had served to excuse the Doctor from visiting The Place, so she had not seen him since the evening of the wager. This was one annoyance. Crisp, too, kept out of her way, which was another—for she was only a woman, and Bluebeard’s wife will never die. Besides, her father had dropped a hint or so about Mr. Woodridge which she could hardly fathom, but which, nevertheless, gave her a good deal of uneasiness.

This is what she wrote to her dear friend and confidante, Miss Sylvia Vandervelde, daughter of her father's esteemed partner, who was now temporarily sojourning in the busy city of *Hamburg*.

"Wimpledale Place, May—, 18—.

"MY DARLING SYL,—I have such a budget of news for you, and serious news too, not gossip, that I scarcely know where to begin. I wish I had your knowledge of what your very German brother would call the philosophy of the human heart—I mean the male human heart, of course. But I have not, so it's no use wishing. You remember what I told you about that handsome Doctor Sutton who saved my life? Since my last letter he has been a great deal with us; papa likes his society exceedingly; they are on opposite sides in politics and indulge in after-dinner arguments; and I, who am no politician, like his society, too. There, that's the truth, Syl. I know what you will say. Your dear friend, Di Vernon (or Lady Gay Spanker, which am I?) has at last met with a congenial spirit. Nothing of the kind. Doctor Arthur Basinghall Sutton—you see I know all his name—though not quite such a chevalier des dames as that consummate master of the arts of conversation and charming tenor, your favourite Reginald Woodridge, is a very handsome fellow, and, when he likes, his manner is exceedingly captivating. And then he can be sensible without being priggish; gay without being flippant. Don't say I am sketching a paragon, my dear, for I am not; I am merely sketching a comely English gentleman.

"The other evening Woodridge and he met, and—you will scarcely credit it, Syl, but at one and the same second I knew that he loved me and that he was jealous of Reginald! Not that he has ~~ever~~ spoken a syllable to me. I don't think he

would dare, unless he were sure of papa's permission—though mind you, my darling, a papa would matter very little to me in such an affair, if I were a man ! He has not even presumed upon the great claim he has to my regard in having saved my life. But on this particular evening, when the gentlemen joined me in the drawing-room, he looked as savage as your brother Albrecht's mastiff. I was vexed with him when I believed I had divined the cause of his annoyance, for I wanted Woodridge to see him at his best.

"Well, will you believe it, my dear Syl, we have not seen our Doctor since. I made papa ask him to dinner, but the aggravating thing returned a polite refusal, pleading professional engagements. I had a good cry when his note came. I now hear from my maid Burroughs, who was told it by the druggist, who had it from Robson, that he has left Heatherthorp to attend some stupid consultation.

"From what papa told me this morning at breakfast it seems that Woodridge and the Doctor nearly quarrelled over their wine on the evening he dined here, about a cricket match ; and they made a wager about it, quite angrily, papa says. Is not all this annoying, dear Syl ? And then papa himself has been worrying my life out about Woodridge. What can he mean ? At one time I thought he meant marriage ; but you know that would be too absurd.

"Do write soon to your affectionate, but perplexed friend,

"KATHERINE WILSON.

"P.S.—Is it not true that two seasons ago, at Scarbro', where you first met Woodridge, his 'attentions' to you were most *prononcé* ? Tell me the truth, there's a dear. And tell me what you would do if you were in my position.

"When are you going to leave that horrid Hamburg ? "

CHAPTER IV.

RECOUNTS THE FIRST PART OF AN ENGAGEMENT WHICH, FOR THE HEROISM THEREIN DISPLAYED, MIGHT HAVE BEEN RELATED IN THE CHRONICLES OF FROISSART RATHER THAN HERE; AND WHETS THE CURIOSITY OF THE READER, IT IS HOPED, AS TO WHAT EXCITING CIRCUMSTANCE THE NEXT CHAPTER WILL UNFOLD.

TO every sportsman in Heatherthorp and Shipley, and to numbers in the neighbourhood who preferred no claim to a knowledge of cricket, the particular Monday in June upon which the two elevens were to meet seemed years in coming, so fervid was the feeling of *esprit de corps* which prevailed. Golightly alone of the Heatherthorpians (as the county paper, in reports composed with much pomp and circumstance, designates our cricketers) managed to keep his head, but he none the less went about his work as though he felt that the eyes of Great Britain and Ireland were upon him. The season was unusually dry; and he was pledged to produce "a finer wicket than had been played on 'i that ground." Daily was he seen in command of a detachment of horse and foot, comprising a watering cart and Brobdingnagian roller, each efficiently manned; and an irregular body of excessively reprehensible boys, who, from their fetching and carrying propensities, were known as "old Jack's retrievers."

'Twas lucky for Mr. Essom that he did not, like ancient

members of his craft, practise surgery as well as shaving, for in his then excited condition an accident might have happened, resulting in his standing before twelve jurymen of the Riding to answer to a charge of murder, or of manslaughter at the very least. Even as it was, although his too-nimble dexter hand had failed to jeopardise his neck, he shed his customers, blood freely—in the holy cause of cricket—as many a smooth chin, dotted like the fine ladies' faces in Hogarth's plates picturesquely testified.

It was now publicly known that Dr Sutton would be one of the eleven, and grievous was the consternation of the godly hereanent. Barjona grimly kept the vials of his wrath scaled till a more fitting season; but the sisterhood who followed the lead of Miss Priscilla Cardmums, and fashioned their harmless little lives according to the example which she set, were seriously scandalised, and chirped plaintively in concert when they became aware of the downfall of their idol. Doctor Sutton was soon made acquainted with the attitude of the Piety of the town, but what cared he? He had learnt during that "important consultation" of which the reader has heard, that his cricket had not left him; and he despised the askant looks of his straight-faced admirers. He hated Woodridge—that is to say, he disliked him as intensely as one gentleman who has broken bread with another may—his arms were as strong, his legs as active, his eye as true as in the old days, and he longed to meet his rival foot to foot, et cetera, et cetera, that he might show Kate, et cetera, et cetera!

By a tacit understanding, politics, church rates, the forthcoming Ascot Meeting, and local scandal were shelved by the frequenters of that exclusive snuggery, the bar-parlour of the Bursingle Arms, nightly discussions of the forthcoming match

taking the place of those topics. There was no betting; for a wager, like a wedding, requires the consent of at least two parties before it can be made, and within the domain of Mr. Sillery there was but one. At the instance of Mr. Daniel Essom several aliens were graciously allowed to sit under the most sacred portion of Martin Sillery's roof-tree, and amongst these was the umpire. Now Golightly's strong point was his reticence; to his "brilliant flashes of silence" he owed much of his reputation for shrewdness. Within these walls he seldom spoke, except in answer to an appeal to his opinion, and then he generally managed to ridicule some heterodox notion which Mr. Essom had previously propounded; for the Hon. Sec. and the umpire were rather jealous of each other, and when the old man had an innings he made the most of it.

Besides Golightly, several members of the eleven were in the habit of dropping in after practise hours, to be lionised by the company. Burly Joe Tadcaster, whose extraordinary powers as a long-stop were known to every parish in the Riding; Harrington, the fast bowler; showy, but undeniably brilliant Will Cranston, the wicket-keeper; and the professional, a varmint-faced, red-headed West Riding man, named Leeson, were amongst the accidental patrons of the room, each complaisantly content to be trotted out by Essom, or patronised by the umpire.

Woodridge, after practising several days on the Heatherthorp ground, under the cynical superintendence of Golightly—that warm-hearted Christian taking especial care that the batsman was "fettled" with a proper kind of bowler—took a temporary leave of the Wilsons, and ran over to Shipley to spend the few days prior to the match with his own team. As soon as the Doctor heard of this from Crisp, he gladdened the

eyes of old Golightly with a sight of *his* style of handling the willow.

Crisp, who remained on the ground to look after his master's cricket paraphernalia, asked Golightly if he thought the Doctor would do?

"Do!" replied the umpire; "why, Mat, he frames at his work as steady as though—as though he wasn't a gentleman at all! See him knock that lad Ashton about; and I should think Leeson hasn't had such a benefit for a very long time. Then the way in which he handles the leather hissel', puttin' on twists that fairly bothers even old Leeson. Depend upon it, he has a nut."

The subject discussed that night by the local parliament in the Sursingle assembled was a phrenological one, namely, "Doctor Sutton's nut!"

Miss Wilson and the Doctor had met but once since the night of the wager, at an amateur concert, in aid of the fund for the restoration of the church of St. Martin-the-Less, and it chanced that his seat was next to hers. Woodridge sang, and had the Doctor been less generous, he might have done his supposed rival a turn by criticising his vocalism in the friendly manner which obtains at evening parties. He, however, did nothing of the kind; and Kate, who by this time understood him better, loved him all the more for his silent magnanimity. And as, after their few words of preliminary conversation; she felt unspeakably overjoyed to be by his side again, her manner softened, and he, sunning in her mood, felt drawn nearer to her in spirit than he had ever been before. Kate spent a happy evening, and in her frank, outspoken way, said so; at which assurance the Doctor experienced such a glow of pleasure that he quite resignedly left her to the care of Wood-

ridge ; and with almost filial regard bade Timothy Wilson, Esq., good-night. From that moment Kate wished with all her might that Heatherthorp might defeat Shipley ; and from that moment, too, she discovered that her toilet-table required frequent replenishing from the stock of Mr. Daniel Essom, and as Mr. Essom could talk of nothing else but the match, and Burroughs had a retentive memory, Kate was kept *au courant* with all the movements in connection with the great event, hearing, amongst other things, that—

“ Doctor Sutton, ’m, Mr. Essom says, is a beautiful cricketer ’m ; and Mr. Essom ’opes there will be plenty of people on the ground to see him play.”

At length the eventful morning broke ; the sun, “ looking all over a stayer,” rising behind the breezy fells, and removing, besides the clouds of night, a great weight from the mind of Golightly, who had risen before the rooks, for the simple reason that he could never sleep a wink the night before a match. He sauntered down to the Sursingle, and ascertained from the ostler that “ ’t Shipley lads were posting it with a coach and four,” and leisurely proceeding along the High Street, ran against Essom.

“ Ha ! Golightly,” exclaimed the hon. sec., “ you have got the start of me, then ? I did think I should rise before every thing this morning, including larks, thrushes, worms, milkmaids, and—umpires. A glorious morning, thank goodness ! It puts new life into one to breathe air like this.”

“ Yes, I think the morning’ll do,” replied Golightly, who never cared to commit himself too far. “ We shall have a blazing day ; ” and he cast a weather-wise glance at the grey gossamer-like clouds, which the sun was rapidly dispelling—“ a blazing day ; and it’s lucky I had the wicket watered last night.”

"On Sunday night?" inquired Essom, with a look of consternation.

"Why, now I come to think of it, it *was* Sunday," replied Golightly, as if the fact had just presented itself to his mind.

"Really, you have acted very injudiciously; you have jeopardised our position most seriously," said Essom. "How can we ask certain people to subscribe to the England match after this?"

"Oh! nobody saw me do it. Besides, what's the use of complaining now, Mr. Essom?" said Golightly. "All I know is that, Sunday or week day, the wicket was dry, and I had it damped. I suppose our boys will be on the ground in time?"

"I fancy there is little fear," said Essom; "I saw them all but Emsden King and Dale yesterday——"

"What, on Sunday, Mr. Essom?" inquired Golightly, ironically.

"Yes," quickly replied Essom, not desiring to argue the sabbatarian point cunningly raised by his interlocutor; "here are their names." And drawing a paper from his pocket, he read, "Cranston, Harrington, Tadcaster, Leeson, Doctor Sutton, Ashton, Lee, Dale, Witherington, Emsden King, and Knowsley. I flatter myself that lot will take some doing."

"Yes, I rather think it will myself," said Golightly. "But they do tell me Shipley's terribly strong this year. However, I must be off."

Shipley duly arrived, announced by a performer on the cornet-à-piston, who took the liberty of anticipating the result of the battle, and steadily trumpeted forth the strains of "See the Conquering Hero comes." This bit of musical audacity was too much for the philosophy of Heatherthorp, and some undeniable hisses mingled with the melody as the coach

containing the cricketers and a strong party of friends drew up at the door of the Sursingle Arms. The commotion caused by the arrival of the Shipleyites had scarcely subsided when an open barouche rattled along the High Street in the direction of the ground. The carriage contained Sir Harry Sursingle and some of the party from the Manor, the remainder following on horseback. Presently the family vehicle of Timothy Wilson, Esq., occupied by himself and his bonny daughter, appeared on the scene, and by-and-by other carriages with family parties from a greater distance even than The Place. The Sursingle 'bus brought two large parties from the railway station, the complement of visitors being made up of importations from the dales, either in spring carts or on foot. As the Wilsons' carriage passed the Sursingle, Woodridge, who stood outside that hostelry enjoying a cigar, lifted his hat, a mark of courtesy deeply resented by all and sundry of the juvenile population present, who considered it high treason on the part of anyone connected with "He'thorp" to fraternise with the sworn enemies of the old town—and a sworn enemy Woodridge was undoubtedly considered. On the other hand, when the Doctor was observed, followed by his man, Matthew Crisp, wending his way in the direction of the ground, the boys gave vent to their feelings in a simultaneous cheer.

Mr. Daniel Essom was one of the last to leave for the ground, for two indispensable members of the eleven, Dale and Emsden King, had yet to arrive. Dale was head gamekeeper to Sir Harry Sursingle, and King, a gentleman farmer, and they lived adjacent to each other, about a dozen miles off. At length the former, a wiry, dark-complexioned fellow, was descried by Essom seated beside King in the dog-cart of the latter, and the little man heaved a deep sigh of relief. It

would have been a match unworthy the name had King been absent. He was one of the biggest hitters in the club.

The ground, situated without the town, by a road which leads into the heart of the Cleveland Hills, was in rare playing order, and when Essom examined the wicket he forgave Golightly his Sunday night's exploit. Having a watchful eye to the funds of the club, he rejoiced that the tribute of sixpence a head—"ladies free"—exactd at the gates of the ground, had been paid by several hundreds of what reporters call the *cognoscenti*.

No time was wasted in pitching the wickets; meanwhile, in the tent set apart for the players, the scarcely less important process of tossing for choice of innings was being conducted; and when it was known that Woodridge for Shipley had beaten Dale for Heatherthorp, and that Shipley were going in, a thrill of highly-wrought expectancy was experienced by all present, even by the occupants of the outermost line of carriages. Kate, whose daintily-gloved hand coquetted nervously with a card of "the order of going in," was perhaps the most interested person there.

Matthew Crisp established himself in a corner of Martin Sillery's refreshment marquee, the centre and oracle of a group of gentlemen in livery. He maintained a running fire of observations, laudatory or severe, during the entire match, and led the cheering, which, by the way, during an encounter of this description, is never spared. One prominent object of interest was Golightly; another, to those who were "native and to the manner born," Golightly's hat. This article of clothing, a subdued white as to hue, and slightly antiquated as to fashion, had for years been regarded in the light of a barometer by the team for which the possessor chanced to be

officiating. When the game looked doubtful or unfavourable for his own party, Golightly fixed his hat firmly in a horizontal position; but as soon as the fortunes of war turned in favour of his own party, the hat was cocked and remained defiantly perched askew until the game was over. Golightly threw the ball to Dale, who, in his turn, handed it over to Leeson. The professional bowled a couple of trial balls, and then rolling up his sleeves, and rubbing his hands with a pinch of grass, at once opened fire.

Will Cranston stood behind the wicket, which was guarded by a colt of seventeen, about whose defence there had been some flattering reports, and a well-known Shipley stayer faced the juvenile. Emsden King stood on the alert at point; Dule was slip; Harrington coverslip; and Doctor Sutton short-leg. Joe Tadcaster occupied his old place in the rear of Cranston. The opening over was a maiden, the colt stopping the last ball, "a real beauty," in a style which elicited a loud expression of commendation from Crisp. Then Harrington handled the ball, and the second which he despatched, with terrific force, was just nicked for three. Thenceforward runs were put on very slowly, and when the colt retired from the wicket, with a well and carefully-earned score of ten to his name, Crisp cheered him incontinently, vowed he was the likeliest lad he had seen for many a day, declared he was a credit to his bringing up, and informed his audience, in confidence, that that was exactly his (Crisp's) style of playing when *he* was a colt. The game grew slowly in interest as the minutes sped, but the fourth man was dismissed—a total of sixty runs having been obtained—before the enthusiasm of the beholders kindled. When, however, Mr. Reginald Woodridge, the captain of the Shipley host, stepped confidently across the sward and took his place in

front of the stayer, Shipley cheered, and Heatherthorp showed its sense of a foeman worthy of its steel in a multitude of ways fully as significant as the encouraging shout of "the other side." Heatherthorp, for the first time that blazing summer's day, began to feel that its work was cut out.

Woodridge's appearance at the wicket put new energy into the field, and poor Kate, who remembered the wager—in good sooth she had never forgotten it—leaned forward as if fearful of losing a single feature of Woodridge's exciting *début*. The batsman manifested the coolness of a veteran hand. He took his block from Golightly with as much scrupulous care as though his life depended upon it; he glanced slowly around the field, and then, assuming a pose that old Felix would have admired, stood slowly moving the willow in a manner that, to a practised eye, showed his supple wrist, and awaited Leeson's attack.

The professional's hand had either lost its cunning, or he was weary of waiting for results. Thus far Harrington had obtained all the wickets. At all events, he dropped one short, and as the pace was moderate, Woodridge stepped forward, and drove the ball fairly out of bounds, a splendid hit for four.

Loud and long were the cheers of Shipley at this marvellous exploit; symptomatic of genuine uneasiness the windy suspiration of forced breath ejected from the chest of Matthew Crisp; intense the nervous excitement of Kate, who knew enough of the game to be aware that this was a bad beginning for her heart-elected champion; and deep the displeasure of the Doctor himself, for it fretted him to see a chance thrown away. It was seldom Leeson lost his head; but the reception of his onslaught made him savage, and he overstepped the crease. "No ball!" shouted the inexorable voice of Golightly. Another cheer from the Shipleyites. The third ball was worse

than either of the former. It diverged to leg, whereupon Woodridge put it away easily for three, and the long-leg buttering the ball, and returning it rashly, another run was made for the overthrow. Again were Shipley delighted, and Heatherthorp correspondingly dolorous. Woodridge stopped the next; and then a consultation was held—Doctor Sutton standing aloof—at the close of which it was evident that Dale would relieve Leeson at the next over.

“What is the name of the batsman, Essom?” inquired Sir Harry Sursingle of that functionary, who, after patrolling the ground innumerable times, was now watching the game from a spot contiguous to that occupied by the party from the manor.

“I beg your pardon, Sir Harry,” said Essom, bustling obsequiously forward.

“I merely inquired the name of the batsman who just now made the drive for four,” repeated the Baronet.

“His name is Woodridge, Sir Harry; Mr. Reginald Woodridge,” replied Essom. “He is resident at Shipley, not a native of the place. He is in the iron trade.”

“Oh—ah! he hits well,” observed the Baronet.

“He *does* hit well, Sir Harry,” echoed Essom; “better considerably than I expected to see, for he has practised a good deal on this ground; but for the last half-hour the bowling has been anything but good. Dale should have taken Leeson off since.”

“Ah—yes—true,” assented the Baronet, closing the interview by replying to a remark from my lady.

Woodridge was certainly the lion of the hour; and amongst others who were roused into demonstrative animation by his prowess was Timothy Wilson, Esq.; but it is not requisite to remark that his enthusiasm was, to put it mildly, rather distasteful to his lovely daughter.

"Bravo!" he shouted; "was not that a splendid hit, Kate, my dear?"

Kate was too deeply absorbed to reply.

"And there's another!" he exclaimed. Run again!—three!—four!—very well run, indeed. I think, my love, our friend the Doctor will begin to quake about his foolish wager if this sort of thing goes on much longer."

"I think, papa," Kate rejoined, slightly but significantly emphasizing the personal pronoun, "nothing of the kind. Doctor Sutton has too much sense to make a foolish wager; that is, if wagers are ever anything else but foolish. He is no empty boaster. Besides, papa, we have not seen him play."

"Yes, I dare say you are quite right, my love," not listening to a word she had said; but, goodness! there's Reginald at it again!"

The last ejaculation might have been construed into a polite—and converse—rendering of remarks not over complimentary to the collective wisdom of the Heatherthorp team, that instant made by Matthew to his select circle of admirers. Indeed, Crisp swore roundly when he saw Woodridge serving Dale's first over pretty much as he had served Leeson's last. Even Golightly could scarcely credit his own eye-sight, and began to fear that Mr. Woodridge had been disguising his play.

One of those panics which sometimes seize an eleven wept all before it now, and Woodridge, who seemed to bear a charmed life, did what he pleased with the ball. In vain were changes of bowling called into requisition; in vain did Cranston achieve wonders behind the stumps, and Tadcaster accomplish wonders behind him; Woodridge made runs rapidly, putting thirty together with such remarkable alacrity, that the stayer declared "he hadn't a leg left under him!"

During a necessary interval for refreshment, Golightly managed to mention two words ventriloquilly—that is to say, without stirring a muscle of his face—to Dale, and the words were—"THE DOCTOR."

Dale winked almost audibly in reply, and presently the beholders, who, being mostly connected with the opponents of Shipley, were getting the least bit tired of the uninterrupted success of Shipley's champion, gave vent to a shout of defiant delight when the Doctor took the ball from the boy Ashton, and, without a preliminary trial, continued the attack.

He had thoroughly mastered Woodridge's style, and he fancied he had discovered a chink in the batsman's armour. Besides "the nut" so heartily lauded by Golightly, the Doctor had another strong point—a very strong point—great skill in holding his own bowling.

There was a confident smile on the face of Woodridge as he stood to receive the first ball; but the smile disappeared when he discovered that the ball which broke all ways, and varied vexatiously in the matter of pace, wanted playing. The Doctor's first over was a maiden, a circumstance by no means overlooked by the critics.

Crisp was beside himself with delight, and exclaimed, "Didn't I tell you?" to one of his liveried friends, in a tone which spoke volumes for his previous fanfaronade. "Now, Mr. Arthur," he ejaculated immediately afterwards, "he's on his mettle; give him a 'ticer."

The Doctor bowled again, and the ball got through; Cranston handled it, and down went the bails!

"How's that?" shouted Will.

"Not out!" replied the Shipley umpire.

The bowler groaned inwardly, but said never a word, satisfy-

ing himself with a significant glance at Dale, who returned the look with interest. There was a muttering among the crowd which bespoke a gathering storm.

“Try him again, Mr. Arthur,” muttered Crisp.

He did try him again. He gave him a 'ticer of another kind, one that was straight, fair, and honest, not the least suspicion of a twist about it. The batsman was all there—and so was the bowler. Woodridge drove the ball forward; but, alas! its flight was not lofty enough. Waiting alertly were a pair of hands that seldom failed. Clap!—clap! went two sounds, one following the other so swiftly you could scarcely distinguish them, and before some of the spectators had fairly realized the fact, Mr. Reginald Woodridge was magnificently caught and bowled by Doctor Sutton!

“Hurrah!” shouted Matthew Crisp, at the top of his voice; “I knew he would do it!” “Hurrah!” roared Heatherthorp, old and young; and “hurrah!” said pretty Kate Wilson, deep down in her heart of hearts, only an unusual brightness of the merry hazel eyes affording a manifestation of her almost tearful emotion.

The Heatherthorp players crowded around the Doctor to offer their congratulations; the Shipley players crowded around Woodridge to congratulate him; the Doctor was gratified, of course; how could he help it? But he could not forget that his opponent Woodridge had made forty-two runs, and *his* runs had yet to be made.

CHAPTER V.

FURNISHES A FAITHFUL ACCOUNT OF THE SECOND AND FINAL PART OF THE GLORIOUS ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN HEATHERTHORP AND SHIPLEY ; AND SHOWS HOW THE DOCTOR FARED WITH HIS WAGER.

THE happy despatch of Mr. Reginald Woodridge occurred when the June sun was at its hottest, and the outfielders were reduced to the verge of utter exhaustion. His dismissal affected them like a miraculous stimulus, and when the Doctor at the beginning of the second over, clean bowled the stayer the entire field appeared to have entered upon a new lease of life, such prodigies of superfluous strength and dexterity did they exhibit with the ball ! For the remnant of Shipley's forces were, with a single exception, "tail-end ;" useful in the field, perhaps, but men of straw with the bat. And Shipley's last hope ? He, Ralph Dobbison by name, an unobtrusive butcher by persuasion, was held in high esteem on both sides of the Wimple for his terrific hitting powers ; but Ralph being an impetuous youth, was seldom sent in to do battle for his side, until some less choleric person had taken the edge off the enemies' bowling. Albeit, since early morn he had been clothed in the flannel raiment peculiar to cricketers, and had further manifested his eagerness for the fray by a premature padding of his lower limbs ; when he saw his friend the stayer clean bowled by the Doctor his exuberant confidence in himself underwent a sudden collapse. He met the deposed batsman ere the latter reached the tent, and under cover of requiring the loan of a glove, said—

“What’s it like, Rob?”

“Like?” replied the exasperated stayer, “I canna say. It looks as easy as eating—but it isn’t. Bide thy time, my lad, bide thy time, and tak’ no liberties wi’ him!”

Never before had such a tremendous responsibility rested upon the broad shoulders of honest Ralph, and he did not like it. “Still,” he thought, “this bowlin’ mayn’t be so queer after all. Nevertheless, there was the inconvenient fact that his side, wanted runs, and he, with his reputation as a slogger at stake, must do his utmost to get them. Grimly stalked he forth treating with a smile of lofty scorn Heatherthorpeian offers of liberal odds against his getting twenty. “P’raps some o’ them would like to be standin’ in his shoes!” Will Cranston—who always was a little too free with his chaff—ventured to hope that uncomfortable Ralph had taken the precaution to have his eyes skinned, for if he had not, he might his well make a will at once. This allusion to the process of skinning Mr. Dobbison construed into a derisive reflection on his calling, and he waxed very wroth indeed. But it was no use showing off *there*, and he thereupon proceeded to take his block. So-o-o! What were they laughing at? He straightened himself stiffly, ground his teeth, and grasped the handle of his bat as though he would have squeezed it in twain. Another and a louder burst of merriment. What *did* they mean? Glancing at the opposite end, where stood the gruesome Golightly, he—familiar with Heatherthorpe customs—discovered the pantomimic cause of the general mirth. With a rough word that sounded like a grunt in two syllables, irate Mr. Dobbison resumed his task, but it required the aid of all his philosophy to prevent his assailing Will Cranston on the spot.

The fact was, the time had arrived for John Golightly to

readjust his barometrical hat. He had cocked it aside, a sign to all beholders that the weather had suddenly changed in favour of Heatherthorp.

“Coom, Rëafe, lad, wacken up!” shouts a well-intentioned but injudicious Shipleyan; “fëace him like a man!”

“Leave him alëane,” growls the indignant stayer; “he naws what he’s about.”

Whether he did or not he was a changed being. He was no longer a free, fierce hitter, who placed more reliance upon a good eye than on scientific tact. To mend matters he had a partner whose sole resource was an unlovely method of defence. The game, despite the Doctor’s sagacious bowling, once more became stagnant. But our hero was a true cricketer: finding that the batsmen were as determined to stay at home as a pair of chinchillas in the depth of winter, he took himself off and restored the ball to Leeson.

Now Leeson and the bold Dobbison were acquainted of old, and the change had the anticipated effect. Dobbison launched out right merrily, and although Leeson inquired more than once, “if he called *that* cricket?” the batsman manifested a lofty contempt for West Riding satire, and continued to make runs.

But his reign was brief. The Doctor again threw himself into the breach, and Dobbison, rendered over-sure by uninterrupted success, fell an easy victim to the strategy of the bowler’s “nut” and the readiness of Will Cranston’s hands. After this little episode the innings came to a speedy conclusion, and Shipley were out for one hundred and thirty-one runs.

While the more severely critical of the spectators inspected the wicket, paced it, surreptitiously poked their sticks into it, removed stray pieces of earth from it, and squinted from one

and like so many carpenters anxious for level results, another, and by far the major portion of the spectators, including all the boys, invaded the borders of the play, for the purpose of rendering unquestioning homage to the heroes of the game, as they returned to the tents to refresh. Your provincial boy is your only true hero-worshipper, and, as a rule, he never chaffs. Verily the home-keeping youth of a town like Heatherthorp would as soon have thought of exercising their homely wits upon the heroes of this famous battle, as a maid of honour would think of deliberately sneezing in The Presence !

"Well, Doctor," said the quicksilver little barber, as he frisked up to our hero, his smooth face wreathed in bland smiles, "it's a great fight, as I thought it would be. Only goodness knows what we should have done without you. Our bowling was cut into mincemeat."

"Yes, they did take liberties, Mr. Essom, and my bowling is new to Shipley. Can we make the runs, think you?"

"Sure of it, Doctor; that is, I would be sure—a word"—drawing the Doctor aside—"if it wasn't for the umpire. Unmitigated old ruffian!"

"Hang him, yes," replied the Doctor; "he gave Woodridge a life."

"Of course he did. I saw it, sir, and so did scores besides. Oh, *we* know him; we have had good and sufficient reason, only the county paper gave him such a jacketing (between you and me I had it done) last summer, we hoped he had reformed. But he'd better take care, or he'll get another sort of jacketing before he leaves *this* ground!"

"No violence, I hope, Mr. Essom," said the Doctor, smiling.

"No, sir, not with *my* consent, for an umpire's an umpire.

though he knows nothing about the game, and is a sharp into the bargain, begging your pardon, sir. But there are some roughish lads here from the dales who would not be so particular."

"Do you want me, Matthew?" asked the Doctor of Crisp, who had approached during the interview.

"Yes; Mr. Arthur——"

"Thanks. Mr. Essom, I shall be ready when my turn comes," said the Doctor, in reply to an observation respecting the order of going in; "and now, Matthew, what is it?"

"Nothing, sir, only——"

"Only a very great deal. If you can put it into a few words," said the Doctor, good-humouredly, for he perceived that the enthusiastic Crisp had been bibulously consigning Shipley to destruction, "you may."

"It's nothing to me, sir," said the sturdy Crisp, "but if that cheating owd rip of a umpire—him know anything about cricket! Some of us has forgotten mair than iver he knew! I tell you what it is, Mr. Arthur, if you don't get somebody to show him t'road back to Shipley, you may just as well turn it up. There, that's *my* opinion!"

"Oh! never mind, Mat——"

"Not out, says he—not out! with a face o' brass. Why, there was eyesight in it. I nobbut wish it was a two days' match; they'd ha' to send for a fresh umpire!"

"What! are *you* thirsting for his blood?" and the Doctor laughed outright.

Crisp, having satisfied the dictates of his conscience, touched his hat and retired; suddenly appearing to bethink himself, he returned, and said in a stage whisper—

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Arthur—there's that bet?"

“ Yes.”

“ Forty-two’s a goodish score, ’specially when it’s made. I think you can top it; but considerin’ that old varmint of a umpire is playing for them, they’ll appeal for everythink, sir. I hope, Mr. Arthur, you’ll not throw a ehance away.”

“ Depend upon it I shall do my best,” said the Doetor, really touched by this proof of the old fellow’s solieitude. “ You must promise me not to spoil their umpire, though.”

“ All right, sir,” said Crisp, determined, at all events, to give the unhappy offieial a bit of his mind if he eame aecross him.

The Doetor had to bestow a word of affable recognition on a considerable number of the eompany, his patients, to exehange a few words of conversation *à propos* of nothing at all with Sir Harry Sursingle and my lady—prodigious people in the Riding, and not to be neglected—and to steer clear of admiring rusties, who *would* retard his progress, moved thereto by the remembrance of his recent exploits in the cause of He’thorp. Yet while he was praiseworthily particular in searehing for the proper recipients of his highly politie but perfectly natural courtesy, he kept the party from The Place steadily in view. Mr. Essom had followed him, and begged the honour of his company at luncheon, but Mr. Essom had begged in vain. So honest Martin Sillery, who had antieipated a eompliment from the Doetor, had to eontent himself with the hearty appreeiation of his *cuisine* exhibited by the players.

Since the eoncert in aid of the restoration of the erumbling fame of St. Martin-the-Less, a marked change had come over our hero. A thorough sportsman, he still meant to try his best to win the wager, and the stake for him was sufficiently heavy, but his hopes of vietory were founded on a simpler basis

than when, hot and angry, he rode from The Place to Heatherthorp, as though the Wild Horseman of the German legend had been close at Kelpie's heels. He yet believed Woodridge to be a conceited puppy, yet longed to show him up; but Kate—bonny, peerless Kate—had surely too much sense to love—bah! to think of *him*. The idea was absurd. Now, as he lounged easily towards the Wilsons' carriage, he pleased himself—it was a lovely afternoon, remember—with building castles in the air. The penultimate stone of the roseate structure was fifty runs in the match—the ultimate, Kate “woo'd and married and a'!”

If he could have known that her manner to him on the occasion of their last meeting was inspired by the fact of her father's having dropped more pregnant hints about her and Woodridge, he would, perhaps, have felt less elated. On the other hand, had he been aware that she saw through the old gentleman's clumsily-veiled praises of the iron-master, and merely waited for a definite statement of his wishes to declare her repugnance for that young gentleman, he would have felt consoled. In her very quiescence there lay concealed a fixed determination to have none of Mr. Woodridge; her thoughts flew, as it were for refuge, to the Doctor, and hence her unwonted gentleness at the concert.

“Ha—Doctor!” exclaimed old Wilson, in a self-satisfied sort of voice; “you are just in time for luncheon. Kate and I were talking about you.”

“Yes, Mr. Sutton,” said she, a richer colour in her cheek, and an intenser meaning in her hazel eyes testifying to her high pleasure at his presence, “papa has laid the usual Derby-day wager of a dozen pairs of gloves against your beating Mr. Woodridge's score.”

“ And you, Miss Wilson ? ”

“ Have taken it, of course,” said Kate.

“ I fear you will lose your gloves,” said the Doctor, smiling.

“ There, Kate ! That’s your champion ! Ha, ha, ha ! What did I say ? I knew he would never run them off, and he is losing heart. I shall hold you to the bet, mind.”

“ I am sure Mr. Sutton never loses heart ! ” and, unconsciously to herself, she spoke with unusual fervour. “ He is too excellent a cricketer. And besides, he must recollect that *I am on his side.* ”

“ I shall do my very utmost, Miss Wilson,” replied the Doctor, and he could not have spoken with deeper earnestness if her life at that moment had depended on the exercise of his medical skill.

“ It was once the fashion for a champion to wear his lady’s favour ; but all the pretty customs are dying out. Never mind ; you are my champion, you know ; and, besides, please to recollect that I have a mercenary interest in your success.”

Was it all good-natured banter ? He wondered thus, as, obedient to the summons of the bell, he put an abrupt termination to his delightful half-hour’s chat, and repaired to the tent for the purpose of ascertaining the order of going in. *Was* he her champion ?

Matthew Crisp again assumed the command of the gentlemen-in-livery, and as his reticence had not increased during the luncheon hour, the said gentlemen-in-livery were less called upon than before to assist in the conversation. His attempts to have a word “ with that umpire ” had been foiled by Golightly, who had counselled silence.

“ It’s not a bit o’ use making a bother, Mat ; wait till the game’s over, and then please thyself ; a umpire’s a umpire. recklect.”

“ But what does he know about the game ? ” inquired Crisp, ignoring Golightly’s plea on behalf of the profession.

“ Knew? Nowt; and that’s the worst on’t. It’s bad to bide, Mat, but we mun bide it.”

The cricketers of our Riding are noble feeders. Whether the luncheon on this particular day was particularly toothsome, or whether the rival forces (habitually suspicious and morose in each other’s presence) found comfort in the consumption of an unusual quantity of the smoking viands, are problems not easy of solution: one thing is certain, from Golightly with his “ two bits o’ salmon and his tumbler o’ sherry ” (a red letter day indulgence), to the rival scorers, the two elevens fed like Sioux Indians after a forty-eight hours’ fast. Yet there were absentees from the feast. The Doctor, as we have seen, found meat more attractive elsewhere; while Will Cranston, mindful of his average, and hoping to play at Lord’s the following year, and the boy Ashton and Dale, were not present at Martin Sillery’s board.

At length the innings began. One hundred and thirty-one runs were considered by Heatherthorp anything but an overwhelming score, and consequently Heatherthorp went to work with a feeling of easy confidence in the result. Not so Shipley. The bowling was true, and the fielding—always a strong point with them—keen, prompt, and certain. There was not the least occasion for the obnoxious arbitration of the unhappy umpire, since, to the dismay of cock-a-hoop Heatherthorp, Harrington, Tadcaster, and Leeson, each good for twenty runs any day in the year, were clean bowled for a total of seven. (That trying luncheon!) Ralph Dobbison, his brawny biceps bared in a fashion that showed “ he meant it,” bowled at one end, and, luckily for him, the wicket had

developed “a hump,” which suited his pitch to a hair. At the other end the Shipley professional, a teasing, tiresome bowler, was doing his side excellent service. Shipley was uproarious when their professional disposed of Leeson—’twas glorious reprisals ! but Heatherthorp roused itself to cheer the Doctor, who, quietly taking his turn, joined the boy Ashton.

Over in the tent fidgeted Crisp. He had seen the wickets tumble in a style that boded disaster and disgrace to Heatherthorp. With the third wicket his trust in the chapter of accidents abated, and when he saw his master equipped for the fray, his feelings were too many for him, and he shouted—

“ Give me six-pen’north o’ brandy—hot.”

Hot ! The quicksilver registered 80 in the shade !

The bowling was too good to warrant liberties, and our hero, playing coolly, contented himself with presenting to all kinds of attack a finished and complete system of defence.

Crisp was in ecstasies, and Dobbison in a rage. The youth Ashton emulated his coadjutor’s carefulness, and the bowling was fairly tackled.

“ Which o’ ye wants to back Shipley now ? ” inquired Crisp, with revived bravado. “ I knew you’d change your crowing afore lang. Now, sir, *let* him have it. Hurrah ! ”

The shout, and accompanying destruction of one of Martin Sillery’s tumblers, followed hard upon the doctor’s first hit, a slashing on-drive for four.

“ There’s a cricketer for ye ! ” exclaimed Crisp. “ Another brandy hot, and a whole glass ! ”

The play thenceforward, for a few overs, was fair give and take, nothing to boast of either way ; when the youth, having put together a careful half-dozen, was taken behind the wicket. Four men out for nineteen runs. Lithesome Will Cranston now

joined the Doctor, and the Heatherthorp scorer sharpened his pencil.

"Jack," observed Cranston, as he took his place alongside of Golightly, "thou'll soon have to shift thy hat, old fellow. Thou sees' yon board?"

"Aye."

"There's nineteen up, isn't there?"

"Yes."

"There'll be ninety before I leave. I feel I can make 'em to-day. Hu!" and with this barbarous ejaculation he swept the air fiercely, and made an imaginary cut for six!

'Twas even so. Cranston played well and most aggravatingly, until each bowler lost his temper. He would talk, and for every ball sent to him he had a word of greeting. All the straight ones he returned with a contemptuous air that was most amusing, at the same time civilly requesting the bowler to oblige him again. Not gentlemanly cricket, perhaps, but it served, in the present case, to incense Mr. Dobbison, and to provoke more than one cross answer from the Shipley professional. In due time the bowling reflected the temper of the operators, and became wild. Then followed the punishment. It was severe, and it excited the beholders beyond measure. Cranston played like one "possest,"—threw away his cap, and hit out at everything; and when the Doctor got a chance, he likewise displayed his slogging capabilities.

"So! I expected it," observed Crisp, as Woodridge took the ball from Dobbison. "'Flashy,' my lad, like thy battin'!"

Mr. Reginald Woodridge's bowling was in no wise remarkable. It consisted of a pretty delivery, a swift pace, and nothing more. Both Cranston and the Doctor mastered it at once. Kate, who looked with all the eyes she had when Wood-

ridge began, **was** overjoyed to find, from the curt answers she received from her papa, the remarks of the critics grouped around the carriage, and her own crude knowledge of the game, that the Doctor's prospects were fully as bright as they had been. But careful observers saw in Cranston's recklessness much cause for apprehension.

The Doctor had made nearly forty in worthy style, when Cranston, putting one easily away—ran. There was really not half a run in it, but the Doctor responded, and got home just a shade sooner than the ball.

"How's that?" sharply and simultaneously queried several voices.

"Out," coolly responded the Shipley umpire.

Such a yell as thereupon arose from proletarian Heatherthorp had never been heard on the ground before. The spectators with one accord crowded into the play, and in two minutes there was a scene of the greatest confusion.

"Turn him off the ground!" "Bonnet him!" "Duck him in the river!" angrily suggested the most violent of the righteously-indignant Heatherthorpians; several rough dalesmen manifesting a desire to carry these mild suggestions into immediate execution. But Shipley rallied round their umpire, prepared for the worst, and the would-be aggressors held their hands.

"Do you think it was out?" calmly queried the Doctor.

"I do."

Another groan—another volley of threats.

"No violence, gentlemen, please. Let us not disgrace ourselves. You think it was out—very well, I bow to your decision; but I am not the less sure that it was *not* out."

"Well done, Doctor!—give it him!" shouted the crowd.

"One moment. I do not say you were aware of the

circumstance, but I backed my innings against the innings of one of *your* side, and—I've lost, of course."

"Do you insinuate anything, Doctor Sutton?" asked Woodridge, hotly.

"No, sir. I never insinuate. What I have to say, I speak right out. You have won your bet, and you have to thank him for it." And the Doctor, pointing to the unhappy official, walked proudly away.

By the exercise of a good deal of soothing diplomacy, Essom quelled the disturbance, although it was some time first. Meanwhile, Crisp never stirred from his seat. He was completely cowed; hadn't even the heart to aid in badgering the umpire. It had fallen out exactly as he had foretold. The Doctor sought him, and could hardly forbear smiling at his rueful countenance when he, in answer to a sharp summons, started and stood suddenly erect.

"Tell Robson I will meet him in half-an-hour. And attend to the horses;" immediately adding, in another tone, "I had nearly done it: got thirty-nine. We shall meet again, Mat, never fear,—*then* let him look out."

Crisp groaned, touched his hat, and departed. The battle ended at sunset, gloriously in favour of Heatherthorp, and the popular feeling of the town was satisfied. The Shipley umpire was unhappy, and not he only. Kate went home perfectly miserable, the Doctor gloomily savage, Mr. Essom officially indignant, and the Heatherthorp eleven intensely combative.

* * * * *

It is night, and the market-room of the Sursingle Arms is full to overflowing. The Shipley party are about to take their departure, and are, pending the preparation of their coach, imbibing (hollow mockery!) a stirrup cup. Mr. Daniel Essom

has just finished a speech ; his face is flushed, and the glasses have not ceased to vibrate on the board. Matthew Crisp (absent from duty without leave) rises—and, in a deep and deliberate voice, says, “ Gentlemen all, afore we part, there’s a health we ought to drink, upstanding, wi’ musical honours, three times three, and all the rest on’t. I ha’ been a cricketer myself, and I *think* I know the game. (Hear, hear.) Ask Golightly. [Golightly : ‘ Quite true, Mat.’] In fact, if ever you want a man to mak’ up an eleven, I’m ready. (Cheers and laughter.) You may laugh, but I say I’m ready. (Loud cheers.) But about this health—I’m not agoin’ to say that Mr. Essom’s wrong, or that Mr. Anybodyelse’s wrong—but I’m certain sure you’ve all missed spotting the best player this day. It’s neither my master (A voice : ‘ It is though!’), nor Mr. Woodridge, nor Cranston. There he sits.” And amid the greatest uproar he turned and pointed steadily to the wretched cause of the afternoon’s *fracas*—the umpire. “ Here’s to the health of the Shipley umpire, and long may he live to give men out as he’s given ’em out to-day !”

CHAPTER VI.

PORTRAYS A PASSAGE IN THE ANCIENT COURSE “ WHICH NEVER DID RUN SMOOTH ; ” EXHIBITS THAT AWFUL PERSON, THE BRITISH FATHER WITH HIS BACK UP ; AND ILLUSTRATES THE WONDERFUL CAPACITY FOR CONSPIRACY WHICH A SUMMER’S EVENING MAY EXCITE IN TWO YOUNG LADIES, WHEN ONE OF THEM IS IN LOVE AND THE OTHER INCENSED.

HEATHERTHORP was itself again. The Doctor duly sent Woodridge “ a cheque for a hundred ; ” Matthew Crisp and John Golightly as duly (aided in their laudable task by sententious tobacco and eloquent ale) annihilated the cricket

pretensions of the Shipley umpire; and—Essom having no more superfluous steam to blow off—the match became historical. But it left its mark. The Doctor was not slow to perceive that his devout patients, incited thereto by that dreadful exemplar of clear-starched propriety Miss Priscilla Cardmums, looked him askance by way of signifying their horror at his recent wilful divergence into the path which leadeth unto destruction; and albeit his impatience of this petty coterie was keen, he was Yorkshire enough to know that any expression of annoyance would probably injure his practice; so he held his peace, and treated Miss Cardmums' flock of pious doves with an amount of arctic civility dreadful to behold. Then he had to face and have it out with Barjona. That cross-grained old gentleman was really "so partial to his young friend," that, as beseemed his great love, he rated him soundly "for his apparent proneness to join the silly multitude in their pursuit of an idle sport." As thus—

"It defies my penetration to comprehend why that man Daniel Essom—who is not without sense, mind'st thou, and is especially clear in his views of bishops and church-rates—can be joyful over games that would scarce become a parcel of rackets boys. But thee! Hadst thou attended the ground in thy professional character, now, to look after broken heads and maimed limbs—and verily I am informed they are plentiful at your cricket-matches—I could have commended thy prudence; but to take a prominent part in the foolery, as I am told thou didst, thou need'st not wonder that I was uncharitable enough to think the Friends' Retreat a fitting abode for thee!"

How could he reply to this admonitory tirade, especially as he had firmly made up his mind to go the full length of his

sporting tether? If Barjona's sense of good taste was outraged by a report of the Doctor's doings in flannels, what *would* he say if, one of those fine mornings, he beheld the said Doctor in the pigskin, attired in all the glories of "pink?"

So our hero held his peace; remained quiet under all the prickings of Heatherthorpian reproof; and if, like the great Gulliver, he refrained from chafing and wriggling beneath the piercing ordeal, the reason was a Lilliputian one—he could not stir.

But he had his revenge. It curiously chanced that the most antisportive of his patients—even Barjona and the gentle Priscilla—required his professional aid, and that before many days were over. Now colchicum and cold water are not the liveliest incentives to what A People's Tribune would term "a logical grasp," and under the influence of those cheerful deterrents of that noble malady, the gout, the gruff Barjona was as tractable as a pet canary, and as little disposed to "argue" as the curate of a mining village. The Doctor was only human, and—it is said—he *did* keep his patient on water-gruel, and nothing else to speak of, a trifle—say a week—longer than was positively necessary for his recovery.

And the tender Priscilla. She, most long-suffering of district visitors, most patient of Sunday-school teachers, and most persevering of soup-kitchen treasurers, was seized with an ailment *not* directly attributable to tight lacing, low living, or the weather.

"It is not exactly a dangerous case," remarked the Doctor, airily, speaking of her to Barjona, "but interesting, you know: the sort of thing one don't meet with every day. Certainly not. Rely upon it, you will not be able to leave your room for a week at the least. (Thank you; yes—one glass; but is it not the least bit cruel to place temptation before you?) I was saying

that Miss Cardmums' is a peculiar case; so you see I naturally take great interest in it. I make the most of it, in fact. Good morning."

Whereat, so unceasing were his attentions, and so kindly, that the poor, dear simple lady "could have no other feeling for that thoughtfully gentle, clever Doctor, my dear"—as she put it to one of her female friends—"than the deepest gratitude and esteem. I grant he may not be as good as we should like him to be, you know; but there are worse than he, I am sure. I think if he could be brought more under my—I mean under our influence—he might—" And a beaming smile, that for a moment smoothed the wrinkles of her worn face, completed the sentence. "But, dear me, young men are so resolute; so dreadfully difficult to control." And she sighed again.—"What can one say? If it were not for that horrid sporting!—Perhaps he may yet be led to see his imprudence."

Having quietly converted the leaders of the enemy into allies, the Doctor rapidly regained his popularity with the devout; and having ere this won the affections of that portion of Heatherthorp which did not plume itself on its evangelical humility and innocence of worldly grime, he speedily became the greatest man in the town, and, next to Sir Harry Sursingle, the most considerable personage in the entire country-side.

The month which had opened so splendidly continued to grow in splendour; and the Doctor, assured by those indescribable signs spiritual the blind god imprints on lovers' hearts that Kate Wilson's interest in him was more than friendly, was as happy as the days were long. (The days *are* long in June, remember.) Now that it was over he felt glad that Woodridge had won the bet. He was sure the issue of his mad undertaking (mad for him, who had no money to play with) had helped to

shape Kate's gentle sympathy into—well, he scarcely knew what ; but it was very pleasant to bask unhidden in its warmth. Hers was too candid a nature to conceal itself beneath the conventional cloak which young ladies frequently find it expedient to wear ; and the Doctor “saw it all,” or, to speak with due caution, fancied he saw it all, during those delightful summer days and nights, as he rode to and from The Place literally through lanes of roses.

Crisp exchanged notes with Kelpie on the subject, and the conclusion he arrived at in the course of the nightly “doings up” was decisive.

“Ah, Mr. Arthur's done now, old fellow ! Fairly hooked—ssss—not but what we saw that lang syne—ssss !—and so's she ! (Over, hoss.) It needs na wise man o' Stowsley to tell us what's to come next—ssss ! White favours—sss—snivellin' women—sss—champagne, and sic like. (Over, hoss.) Bells fit to deafen ye, a sovereign to the clerk, a shower of owd shoes, and off we go—ssss—s ! Never mind, Kelp, my lad ; if shap', mak' an action has owt to do with it, she's as true a bred 'un as ever made a human bein' wish hissel' a hoss to carry her for ever and a day—ssss—and it's nowt ag'in her that she doesn't throw back to't sire. Nowt ! (Come over !)”

The Doctor's frequent visits to Wimpliedale Place did not escape the peering eyes of the gossips—seized and possessed as they habitually are with a stupendous thirst for local knowledge. Essom heard at the Sursingle that the Doctor was given to evening rides abroad in the direction of Squire Wilson's residence, and divining the cause thereof, he determined to be early on the scent, for the purpose of confirming his conjectures. A timely call from Miss Burroughs brought all his powers of finesse into play.

"It *is* very hot, Mr. Es'm. I never knew such trying weather for complexions, and it's a poor consolation to a lady with a skin the colour of m'hogany to be told that all the farmers have got their 'ay in."

"You are right, Miss Burroughs; but then country isn't so particular as town. But talking of complexions, and speaking professionally, I think you ought to take care of yours."

"Oh, Mr. Es'm!"

"Not at all—not at all, ma'am. I never flatter. If you will pardon the liberty, allow me the pleasure of presenting you with this pot of cold cream."

"Mr. Es'm, really——"

"Not at all, I assure you. This weather it is invaluable. It is compounded from a French recipe. By the way, talking of complexions, you will soon all want to look your best at The Place, if what I hear is true."

"If I said I didn't guess your meaning, Mr. Es'm, I should be telling a fib. Oh, Mr. Es'm, country air's bad for secrets! Not that there's anything reg'lar yet; but people have eyes, I should hope, and ears too, for that matter."

"Cert'nly," replied Essom, letting Miss Wilson's own maid have her head.

"It's not for me to so much as whisper; but you mark my words, if there isn't a pretty to-do before long, my name's not Martha Burroughs!"

"Impossible!" somewhat irrelevantly ejaculated the attentive Mr. Essom.

"The father of somebody, Mr. Es'm, is as blind as a newborn kitten, and somebody herself has a spirit of her own——"

"To be sure," assented the hairdresser.

"And when somebody's father sees what's going on (not that I have any right to complain of a certain handsome young gentleman *we* know, Mr. Es'm), and the other young gentleman which he meant for somebody is put on one side, there'll be a pretty to-do."

"You cannot mean Mr. Woo——"

"You will please to recollect that I have mentioned no names, Mr. Es'm; and if you was to go down on your bended knees you would not get me to mention names. But I must be going, for we are expecting a visitor at The Place."

"A visitor?"

"Miss Vandervelde, a friend of Miss Wilson's; a German young lady, with as many airs as a actress."

Shortly after this interview Essom manœuvred a meeting with Crisp. The interview was brief.

"I hear the governor's to be married, Crisp?"

"You happen to hear a good deal that's not gospel."

"But he is to be married; isn't he?"

"Ask him."

"Why, everybody says so."

"No!"

"Don't they, then?"

"Matthew Crisp hasn't said it yet, that I know."

"Anyhow everybody's full of it."

"Really! then everybody has had more than's good for 'em Ta! ta!"

And that was all he got out of Crisp. He did not doubt the integrity of Burroughs's mysterious narrative; indeed, Crisp's taciturnity supplied a negative proof of her truthfulness. By-and-bye it was rumoured in Heatherthorp—and the report ran "in good set terms"—that the Doctor was about to marry

the Belle of the Riding right out of hand, for had she not ordered her trousseau from London? were not the bridesmaids selected? had he not signified his intention of adding a new wing to the house? and—very much so forth? All which suggestive queries grew out of a lady's-maid's native loquacity, the said loquacity having previously been accelerated by the judicious application of a large pot of cold cream, "compounded from a French recipe!"

Not many days had elapsed since the cricket match, but Squire Wilson, working like a mole in the dark, had not allowed the grass to grow beneath his feet. He felt instinctively that the wedding he had set his mind on would be repugnant to Kate, and therefore he wrought at his plans not only without her approval, but without her cognizance.

It had come to this. There was a depression in the iron trade; and Woodridge, who had embarked his capital too late in the day to enable him "to get round," was beginning to feel embarrassed about his future. Old Wilson knew it, and the swifter to bring about his darling scheme, traded on his knowledge. He so contrived matters that Woodridge, acting upon some very broad hints that were conveyed in certain letters, which the diplomatic proprietor of Wimpledale Place took care to write, made formal application for Kate's hand. Overjoyed with the success of his scheming, the Squire was unusually fruitful of dark hints at the breakfast-table on that particular morning. Kate, who recognised Woodridge's writing on the envelope, half guessed the contents of the letter, and earnestly longed for the arrival of her friend Miss Vandervelde, who was expected by the mid-day train.

"I am sorry I cannot accompany you to the station, my dear, and you must tell Sylvia so."

"Yes, papa, I will."

"It is an important magistrates' day; some of the Riding business to be settled, and I could not well be absent."

"I will explain everything, papa."

"Do, my love. I shall be back to dinner, of course; and you recollect, I dare say, that Sutton is coming, too."

"O yes, papa," replied Kate, with a slight blush.

"He had a patient to see in this neighbourhood, and I believe he will drop in early. And now I must be off"—kissing her. "By the way, Kate, what a capital match your friend Sylvia would make for our Doctor, eh? I must give him a hint about it this evening."

"Her friend Sylvia, indeed! What did he mean?" asked Kate, almost fiercely of herself, as her father left the room.

He had not dared to tell her of Woodridge's offer. He knew the young gentleman would himself write to Kate by the next post, and, thanks to Wimpledale Place adjoining a main-line station, the letter would reach her hands before his return from Heatherthorp.

Mr. Wilson was in great good humour with himself as he mounted his substantial cob, and trotted off to Heatherthorp. Kate, poor girl, was nervous and uneasy, and feverishly impatient for the arrival of her friend Sylvia. She did not hazard a conjecture as to the latest cause of her papa's complacency. That it was produced by Woodridge's letter was sufficient for her, and, although her mind was made up, she wanted a confederate to support her in the encounter with her papa, which, sooner or later, must come. She was ready to be driven to the station at least two hours before the train by which Miss Vandervelde had arranged to come was due, and so was the carriage; Burroughs, in high dudgeon, telling the

coachman that he'd better get the carriage ready, for goodness knew what was about to happen to Miss Wilson ! What did it all mean, she should like to know ? And she tossed her pert face (glistening from a recent copious application of cold cream) in a manner that boded rebellion.

Kate could not rest indoors, so taking a book in unconscious make-believe, and carelessly tossing on a garden hat, she sauntered forth in the direction of Wimpleside. It was a glorious June day, bright and warm, with a high wind that swept the far blue sky of all but a few stray strands of snowy cloud. In a brief space she began to experience the gracious influence of the summer's maturity, and when the bold wind played with her tawny tresses, transmuted now into threads of burnished gold where the sun's rays rested, and nearly took possession of her hat, she burst into a light careless laugh, the expression of preoccupation vanished, and she glanced around with a face that said, to the world's cares and sorrows, as plainly as it could speak, "Come, if you dare ; I am ready !"

It was not difficult to discern whither her thoughts had travelled during the last few minutes. Her first memorable meeting with Arthur (for so she called him, speaking softly to herself), her growing liking for him, her admiration of his simple manly nature, and finally, disguise it as she might, her love for him, were all passed in rapid review. *But did he love her?* She thought he did, only he had not yet spoken. Another rush of the wind, fresh from the moors, set her thoughts dancing off on another track. She gazed across the river, her eyes alight with earnest feeling, and dwelling lovingly on the undulating swells of the heath-clad moors, sang a verse of a joyous ballad, that smelt of the bracken and heather, and whinflowers of her native dales.

The echoes of her sweet voice had scarcely died away when she heard a footstep. She turned, the Doctor stood before her.

"Mr. Sutton!" she exclaimed, with an air of confusion, that made her look prettier than before, "and to surprise me thus!"

"Nay, Miss Wilson, I have no more than availed myself of the privilege of an old friend. You must really pardon me, especially as I have probably deprived myself of the pleasure of hearing the remainder of a ballad so racy of the soil, and so pretty into the bargain, as that which you were singing."

"I think you once told me, that you were no adept at flattery; that—it was more in Mr. Woodridge's way."

"Oh, yes, yes; I did not mean to flatter—that is, not in your sense of what flattery is. But I had better say no more, for I am only making matters worse. I came to ask Mr. Wilson to excuse my dining with him to-day. Robinson is unwell, and I cannot be off duty."

"Not coming, Mr. Sutton!" she said, in a tone of disappointment.

"No, and are you very sorry?" he asked, in a tone she had never heard him use before, he peering keenly into her face the while. "Are you indeed sorry?"—he added, taking her hand—"that I must be absent? Oh, Kate!" continued he, his voice growing deeper in its earnestness, and his face glowing with new life, "I must say what I have wanted to say week after week, and day after day, but could not—fearful of offending you. Kate, darling, I have lately got to think that I am not altogether indifferent to you, and now let me know the worst; let me hear from your lips, if the Kate who has been so precious to me ever since the night of that terrible ride for life, when I received her fainting in my arms, is willing to forego a brilliant future for the quiet of a country doctor's dull existence?"

Her head drooped. She was dumb.

“Kate, I love you!—may I hope, darling?”

Had the breeze, drowsed by the fierce sun, gone to sleep in the hollow? Perhaps; else how could the Doctor, who was a tall fellow, have heard so faint a “yes,” as that which timidly passed her sweet lips?

If Kate had sauntered languidly from the garden gate to the riverside, her return to the house was infinitely slower—and with reason. She was not alone; her companion had much to say, and she, meek and subdued, and her heart running over with happiness, was content to listen, and steal furtive glances between the pauses in his earnest talk, at his eloquent face. She was glad to escape to her own room, to be alone with her own delicious thoughts, and when the Doctor went on his way rejoicing, she shut herself up, and in fancy tried to combat the indignation of her father. He must soon know all, and then what would he say? Never mind, Arthur loved her.

The business of the Riding was completed without a single hitch, much to the surprise of some of Squire Wilson’s friend’s, who had expected to see him in his favourite character—that of an irritating obstructive. After business there was the usual light refecton, and lighter discussion of the latest scandal.

“Ah! by the way, Wilson,” observed the Chairman of the Bench, Sir Harry Sursingle, “am I premature in congratulating you on—eh, a—an auspicious event?—eh?”

“I am quite in the dark as to your meaning, Sir Harry,” replied the astonished Squire.

“Come, come; that won’t do, you know. Your daughter—”

“What of her?” rejoined the old gentleman, hotly.

“Is to be married to our young Doctor, is she not?—the neighbourhood rings with the news.”

The blank look with which Mr. Wilson received Sir Harry's intimation was highly flattering to that estimable Baronet's powers of raillery, especially as the other magistrates so far descended to the level occupied by ordinary beings as to indulge in a roar of laughter at the expense of the proprietor of Wimpledale Place. Old Wilson maintained a grim silence; the cut was too deep to be healed in a hurry; and as soon as he could decently get away he left for home.

Meanwhile, Miss Sylvia Vandervelde had arrived; and at the moment of old Wilson's departure for Heaththorp was reclining on an ottoman, shielding her Dresden-china face—her pure features, fair hair, and blue eyes, from the rays of the setting sun with a Watteau fan. There was an open letter in her lap.

"It is two years since," she said, speaking with dainty deliberation, as though she liked to listen to the inflections of her own voice, "and I was more than two years younger then, believe me. He flirted with me, Kate; I loved him (you see I can be cool over it now), and then he—what would you call it——?"

"Threw you over; I suppose," observed Kate, simply.

"Yes, threw me over; and I bore it, Kate, calmly: but I did not forget. And now he proposes to you!—Did he know of my projected visit?"

"No."

"Then he must not know. He wants a reply—poor young gentleman! He shall have one which, if you please, I will dictate; and when he comes I will receive him."

"Oh, Syl! I shall never be able to repay you for all this!" exclaimed Kate. "And papa?"

"Leave him also to me."

Somehow, the Squire's determination to prove his paternal authority completely evaporated, or rather exhibited itself in a very mild form, when he discovered that the Doctor was not going to show. The young Jesuit had heard something, he supposed, and was displaying the white feather. He was exceedingly grumpy at table; and Miss Vandervelde, to the mischievous delight of Kate, did not add to his equanimity by *her* remarks. In a few neat sentences she succeeded in placing Mr. Reginald Woodridge before the mind's eye of the Squire in a light very different from that in which he had seen him before. But the Doctor! To steal his daughter's affections under her father's very nose! It was a consolation to him, as far as it went, to learn from Burroughs that Miss Kate had received a letter. All might be well yet, thought the Squire, for Woodridge would be there to-morrow. But that Doctor!

CHAPTER VII.

DEALS WITH A TRIANGULAR DUEL, APATERNAL EBULLITION, A SENTENCE OF DOMESTIC EXPATRIATION, AND A SHOWER OF TEARS; DESCRIBES HOW THE DOCTOR CUNNINGLY BLENDED THE EXERCISE OF ONE GENTLE CRAFT WITH THAT OF ANOTHER, AND AFFORDS A PROSPECT OF THE RETURN MATCH BETWEEN HIM AND MR. REGINALD WOODRIDGE.

KATE could not sleep for thinking of the eventful morrow, so she rose with the rooks (which are always in time for those earlier risers, the worms, it is said), and tapped at Sylvia's door, to the manifest discomfort of that nonchalant young lady, who herself perfectly unruffled at the imminent prospect of a

tempest of the heart, attributed this premature visit to the strange habits of the natives of Cleveland. Kate wanted to resume the discussion of the theme uppermost in her mind: "it was such a nice hour for a talk!" But Miss Vandervelde held different views, and therefore flatly declared that nothing would induce her to gratify the whim of her friend, who turned away with a sigh of disappointment, and, heedless of a parting injunction "to return to her room that instant," astounded the maids who were already astir, and caused Watson the bailiff to doubt the evidence of one of his senses, as, with a melodious "good morning," she tripped along the garden-walk towards the river-side.

Every luminous glance of his clear grey eyes, every rich tone of his tender voice, came back to her as she once more stood on the spot where yesterday they had tarried together. With the lark's limpid gurgle ringing in her ear, the air, redolent of dewy freshness, playing upon her cheek, and a sky empty of all save clouds streaked with the amber-and-violet promise of another bright day, she could not feel unhappy, albeit her reflected joy wore a tinge of care. It must end bravely, she thought, and that very day would decide everything!

The Squire seldom indulged in such luxuries as visions. Yet lately he *had* dreamt his dream—of mating his daughter with the slip of an ancient county family; and, without being at all conscious of it, he had taken to impalpable architecture.

On this very morning Kate had scarcely disappeared within doors when he, likewise at odds with sleep, appeared without, and presently set off at a brisk rate towards the Wimple brooding the while with all the energy of a minor poet of immature experience. That day would, nay should, decide all His Kate!—Reginald Woodridge, Esq., Sir Reginald Wood.

ridge, Bart., M.P.—his Kate Lady Woodridge! The thing was feasible. Cotton and beer, and indigo and pimento, and goodness knows what besides, had been veneered with titles—why not pig-iron? But, he meditated, when he had finished his castle from basement to battlement, and in fancy waved a flag of triumph over its tallest tower, Woodridge will never be captured until that presumptuous Doctor is suppressed. They must be married instantly!

He became so elated with the idea of such an immediate realization of his darling project, that for the moment he forgot he *was* a Squire, and began to whistle a tune he had not remembered for years. Abruptly stopping in the middle of a bar, he said—

“Yes, we must get it all settled now. While Miss Vandervelde’s here—she’ll help Kate to arrange everything. And then, Sir Harry, I shall have the laugh of you, I’m thinking. By the way, I wonder if Woodridge will come by the first train?” and he glanced at his watch. “Bless me! only half-past six! How long this morning is, to be sure!”

Not only with the head of the house of Wilson did the morning seem to lag. Kate had never known minutes so leaden-winged. At length, fairly tired out, she once again sought and this time obtained, admission to Miss Vandervelde’s room.

“Good morrow, Miss Impatience,” said Sylvia, with a look of assumed anger as she opened the door. “And now you have effected an investment of the fortress—or, I should say, broken in upon my natural rest, soured my naturally sweet temper, et cetera—what do you want?”

“I know I ought to feel ashamed of myself, Syl,” replied Kate, administering propitiation in the shape of a hearty kiss; ‘but, my dear, I could not sleep.’”

"And, therefore—really, Katherine Wilson, your logic is unimpeachable—you felt it incumbent upon you to disturb my slumbers!"

"Do spare me, Sylvia!" said Kate, appealingly, "there's a darling. Consider."

"That is precisely what I am doing. Gravely considering—whether, having arisen at a distressingly early hour, and thereby rendered myself liable at any moment to a provoking fit of yawning, I ought to undertake a part in that little domestic drama we projected last night."

"Oh, Sylvia! if I thought you were in earnest!" exclaimed Kate, in tones of anguish.

"And is it not enough to make me in earnest, think you? Have I not to confound a paternally-favoured suitor, allay the wrath of a furious papa, and smooth the way for the return of a banished lover? The heroine of a harrowing three-volume novel could not do more."

"I trust the task may not be as arduous as you imagine," said Kate.

"I dare say," replied Miss Vandervelde, high good humour shining merrily through her assumed petulance, and lending new piquancy to her statuesque German face—"I dare say you do. You exhibited your deep concern, my dear Kate, by first of all depriving me of last night's beauty-sleep, and then by taking special care I did not repair the loss this morning."

"But Syl——"

"But me no buts"—as Mr. Tennyson phrases it, but retire. I have sundry orders for my maid, who is singularly happy at guttural objurations when her mistress is cross or wakes her too soon. As she is likewise given to colds in the head, I dare

not conjecture what effect the damp air which is now blowing from the mountains will have upon her.—Retire ! ”

“ Nay, Sylvia,” laughingly replied Kate, “ you must first tell me one thing. What are you going to do with that old fright of a dress and that bundle of letters ? ”

“ If my brother were here he would enlighten you. You have played in charades, child—can you not guess ? I am merely about to show Mr. Woodridge that I have lost none of the dramatic talent he once applauded. Now go and arouse your Burroughs.” And she fairly pushed Kate out of the room.

They met at the breakfast table, and Kate could scarcely forbear expressing her surprise at Sylvia’s toilette. If she had ever doubted her friend’s strength of mind, that doubt was set at rest by seeing her attired in the very “ fright of a dress ” which had previously awakened her wonderment. Mr. Wilson was in remarkably good spirits, and Miss Vandervelde entered thoroughly into the old gentleman’s humour. She was an admirable actress. Naturally, Woodridge’s name arose in the conversation. Yes ; Miss Vandervelde had met a Mr. Woodridge, she thought, a season or two ago at Scarbro’, but she could not be certain if it was the same. Did she not mention the circumstance to Mr. Wilson last night ? Was he tall ?—passably good-looking ? Ah ! if, as Mr. Wilson declared, he was exceedingly handsome, it could not be. Possibly a brother—or a cousin, perhaps. Still Mr. Wilson would greatly oblige her by not mentioning her name to Mr. Woodridge ; when she met the young gentleman, she could, without embarrassment, see for herself.

The repast over, Mr. Wilson, diplomatic to the last, made his excuses to the young ladies, and betook himself in search

of Woodridge, whom he calculated on meeting at the road-gate to the grounds, where the Sursingle omnibus generally stopped. As her papa left the room Kate bent eagerly forward and whispered—

“ Sylvia.”

“ Yes, my dear,” replied Miss Vandervelde, anticipating the communication and interpreting it in her own peculiar fashion. “ Your papa, like many very clever schemers, is overdoing his part. He goes to prepare Mr. Woodridge for the interview.”

“ Oh, Syl, I do wish it were over ! ”

Miss Vandervelde remained silent. It is not unlikely that she wished the same, now the interview was so close at hand. But she did not lose courage.

“ Kate,” she said, in equable tones, “ about my eccentric dress. Tell me, when were these funny sleeves in fashion ? ”

“ When ?—two summers since.”

“ Yes. The summer Reginald Woodridge ceased to flirt with poor silly me. He admired this dress, he used to say. I wonder if his admiration for it has outlived his affection for the wearer. You now divine the story tied up in that bundle of letters.”

An hour later behold Kate Wilson seated in a pleasant apartment in the shadiest wing of The Place, pretending to read. She half faces the door, and the subdued light which trickles through the venetian blinds of one of the lofty windows lights her brown hair, restless hazel eyes, and flushed face into as pretty a picture as artist could wish to paint. She is alone—yet no ; she whispers, “ Sylvia, he is coming ; ” and a slight rustling behind the curtain of another lofty window, succeeded by the sound of a voice which whispers, “ Keep a stout heart, love,” suggested the surreptitious presence of that pretty conspirator.

"You will find Kate in the drawing-room," remarks Mr. Wilson, apparently from the hall. "You know the way?"

"Thank you, yes," replied Woodridge; and in another minute he has tapped at the door, been bidden to enter, and—he stands before the lady of his quest.

Woodridge, accomplished as he was in the artificial dalliance of the drawing-room, felt for once constrained to admit that there are moments when the well-trained self-sufficiency of a man of the world is at fault. At any rate, the feeling which stirred him now amounted to an impression of this kind. He liked Kate well enough; she would make an uncommonly charming wife; but the organ which, in his case, did duty for a heart, declined to beat with wild rapidity at the idea of the union. He would go in and win; she was a prize worth the winning—the old gentleman coveted him for a son-in-law—a fellow must be turned off some day, and so on. Love—well yes; he dared venture to say she would find enough of the high-pressure, self-sacrificing sort at the circulating library! and, confound it, wasn't *he* worth having? On his way to The Placc such thoughts as these had afforded him unmixed comfort, but now he was in the presence of the lady herself they "little relevancy bore" to the momentous object of his mission. The Miss Wilson he had so often sang, and danced, and ridden with could not possibly be the radiantly unembarrassed lady who received him so frostily now.

There was just the least dash of the prig in Woodridge's composition, and his manner betrayed it, for, notwithstanding his surprise at her coolness, he wore the paternal credentials in his face, and comported himself like a very victor. This angered her. If love is blind to the imperfections of the beloved, how wonderfully hawk-eyed it becomes when the beloved

is assailed! Kate was standing up for Arthur as well as herself, and she read the motive of Woodridge's demeanour at a glance. He had never appeared so despicable before. It is doubtful whether Miss Vandervelde even could have infused more quiet intensity into a look of scorn than that which slept beneath Kate's long lashes as she rose to acknowledge Woodridge's greeting. "So, sir"—she thought—"you fancy I am, to be lightly won. We shall see."

"Pray be seated, Mr. Woodridge," she said. "You must feel heated and tired with your walk through the grounds."

Still unabashed, but more puzzled than ever, he obeyed, observing, "You are quite right, Kate—that is Miss Wilson—the weather is most oppressive." Hang it! was he such a noodle as to open fire in that fashion? The weather!

She waited for him to proceed with the attack, and he, suffering by this time from a prickly heat that was not assignable to the sun's rays, waiting likewise. Beaten at the outposts, he paused before renewing the charge.

"Kate—Miss Wilson——"

"If you prefer it, let it be Kate," she interposed.

"Thank you," he rejoined with fervency, drawing a long breath of relief; "that sounds like your own kind-hearted self;" adding, after a moment's pause, "Kate, is it requisite for me to say why I am here? I come at your gracious bidding, armed with the sanction of your father. I come, conscious from most enchanting experience"—he was fairly in his stride at last—"of the close identity of our tastes; let me beseech you, then, to hearken to my suit. Let me ask you to try and convert your esteem for me into an affection like that which I have long silently cherished for you, Kate."

"Mr. Woodridge——"

“ Say Reginald.”

“ Reginald Woodridge, then, it matters little which”—and she rose, an example he wonderingly followed—“ you have fallen into a sad mistake. This farce must end.”

“ Mistake !—farce ! ”

“ Yes. I bade you come because I wanted you to hear from my own lips my opinion of this distressing business. You speak of esteem. Until yesterday that word would have but imperfectly expressed my regard for Reginald Woodridge; to-day he has taught me almost to despise him ! ”

“ Miss Wilson——”

“ Is not to be thrown in to turn the scale, sir, even though her own father be a party to such a sordid bargain as that which Mr. Reginald Woodridge seeks to make.”

“ Believe me, you wrong me deeply.”

“ Would that I did, for your own sake ! But no ; I cannot be so much at fault. I have long suspected—that I should say it—poor papa’s schemes,” and she sighed ; “ but I prayed he might *not* find a pliable instrument in Mr. Woodridge.”

“ Let me explain.”

“ You are a glib wooer, sir, and rumour, which credited you with an exploit not unlike what this might have been, some two years since, cannot have been so false after all.”

“ And can you, Kate, give heed to that idle story ? ”

“ Yes, Mr. Woodridge, *she can and does*,” said Miss Vandervelde, emerging from behind the curtain, “ because she has heard that same idle story from—me ! ”

To say that Woodridge was astonished at the appearance of the third actor in the duel is to say nothing. In the fierce conflict betwixt amazement, anger, and mortification which raged in his breast possibly mortification predominated ; but he

still wore his mask, and, bowing politely to Miss Vandervelde, said—

“A lengthened absence from England has apparently intensified Miss Vandervelde’s natural aptitude for artifice. She has played many parts, but surely none with such success as this. I am at a loss for its appellation, though; what shall we call it?”

“What you please,” she replied, quietly.

“Considering it began with that kind of listening called eavesdropping (a practice said to prevail extensively amongst domestic servants), which presupposes an offensive amount of curiosity on the part of the listener, it might be difficult to describe. The part is ‘dressed,’ too, and has its ‘properties,’ I see”—and he glanced meaningly at a packet of letters in Sylvia’s hand. “However, to come to the point, may I venture to inquire why Miss Vandervelde interests herself so deeply in my concerns?”

“Yes, you may,” she said, in the quiet tone she had used before. “You may, and I will tell you. Two years ago, you, then little better than a needy adventurer, and acting under the impression that I was an eligible *parti*—well—you lied your way into my affections.”

“Miss Vandervelde, such an assertion as this is intolerable!”

“It is true,” she continued, not altering her tone in the least. “I was led at last to doubt your sincerity, and, to put it to the test, caused a false report of my comparative poverty to be circulated. I was an eligible *parti*, but you believed I was not, and—you threw me over. Some women are spiteful, Mr. Woodridge; I am. I vowed to be recompensed for the injury you had done me; and Kate, my darling, eavesdropper,

conspirator, or what they will, I think I have been recompensed to-day ! ”

Kate's look of gratitude replied eloquently to her appeal.

“ It were useless prolonging this interview farther,” said Woodridge, with concentrated rage ; and then, turning to Kate, he added, assuming a gentler manner, “ Kate, is your answer to be no ? ”

“ It is—*No !* ”

He went, but worthy Mr. Wilson did not hear the result of his interview until the following day. He had no heart to face his might-have-been father-in-law, and so the demolition of the worthy old gentleman's dream—Kate declining to enlighten him in the least, and Miss Vandervelde maintaining an equally aggravating silence—was deferred until Woodridge arrived at Shipley, whence he penned a formal intimation of his discomfiture. Timothy Wilson, Esq., was not so thunderstruck as Woodridge had expected he would be, but his anger knew little bounds. If he was angry when he perused Woodridge's epistle, his heat fairly whitened when he read a letter on the same absorbing theme from the pen of Doctor Sutton. That young gentleman expressed his regret that he had not seen Mr. Wilson at Heatherthorp the day before, as he had hoped, but prior to revisiting The Place he deemed it his duty, et cetera, et cetera. In fact he asked Mr. Wilson to make him a present of Kate. Angry fathers are so common, and their remarks under certain not uncommon trials so trite, it is only requisite to state that the breakfast that morning was a dismal meal. Mr. Wilson used strong language : Miss Vandervelde contributed anxious looks ; while Kate shed more tears than she had done since her mother died. The long and short of it was that Doctor Sutton received sentence of eternal

expatriation on the spot, a sentence the Squire duly reduced to writing at the earliest opportunity—which was not very early, by the way, for except in business his was not the pen of a ready writer, and to tell a man with whom you have been on terms of cordial intimacy that you have no desire to see him under your mahogany tree more, requires both nerve and tact.

Kate was broken-hearted at the cross turn which events had taken, but Sylvia was equal to the emergency. The Squire wound up his mandates by interdicting all correspondence of an epistolary character between the houses of Wilson and Sutton and thereupon betook himself to Shipley. Consoling Kate with the assurance that she should not leave until all was made pleasant again, Sylvia ordered out the family carriage, and betook herself to Heatherthorp—alone. She had some shopping to do, she said. How she suddenly became prostrated by an agonizing headache, and was compelled to seek refuge in Doctor Sutton's surgery; how that talented medical adviser effected an instantaneous cure; and how the pair chanced upon a conversation which enthralled their attention thirty minutes by the surgery clock, need not be written with particularity in these unerring chronicles. It concerns us rather to discover what came of Sylvia's headache.

The choleric Squire, ill-suited to play the part of an unrelenting parent, found The Place nearly unendurable. Kate's sorrowful face was an hourly reproach, and accordingly he daily oscillated in an uneasy manner between Heatherthorp and Shipley, leaving the arch-traitress, Sylvia, a clear stage for her machinations. The Doctor religiously abstained from visiting The Place, and Sylvia, whose headaches became alarmingly frequent, was obliged to pay frequent visits to Heatherthorp. Presently it was given out that Doctor Sutton had broken down

through over-work, and was going away to recruit his energies with a month's salmon-fishing in Scotland. It might have been expected that this last blow would have utterly annihilated Kate; but not so. He went his way across the Tweed, and she, acting under the advice of a Shipley doctor, whom Mr. Wilson consulted, took long drives into the least frequented recesses of sylvan Cleveland, accompanied by Miss Vandervelde, who was glad of this opportunity of familiarizing herself with that beautiful tract of Yorkshire moorland. In the course of one of their excursions they halted at a tumble-down mill on the Wimple, about a dozen miles from Heatherthorp, and to their overwhelming amazement beheld the Doctor! Three days previously he had been landing salmon of goodness knows what weight in Scotland, and here he was! Shall the meeting be described? Need the crafty delight of the arch-traitress, who alleged that the only way to satisfy her conscience was to enact the part of a stern Spanish duenna, be dwelt upon! No! Was ever line so innocent of scales and fins as that of the Doctor's? Were ever angling excursions so delightful? But even these days came to an end, and the Doctor, much benefited by his holiday, Heatherthorp said, returned to his duty, and, considering his state of exile, did not repine. Mr. Wilson kept it up, to Kate's sorrow, but she, poor girl! was more resigned to his rigour, Sylvia, in whom she placed implicit trust, staking her reputation as a conspirator that he would before long be obliged to capitulate.

Heatherthorp had scarcely time to discover that the Doctor had ceased to visit The Place, when it was announced at the bar-parlour of the "Sursingle Arms" that "the Wilsons were off to Scarbro'." Kate never wrote to him all the two months they were away, nor he to her; but Miss Vandervelde,

who went to Searbro' with the Wilsons, kept up quite a voluminous correspondence with him, and Kate was not the least jealous ! One evening when the corn was at its goldenest, and the heather on the moors at its purplest, the Doctor, who had just heard of the Wilsons' return, was riding leisurely home, thinking of Kate. He was tired with a hard day's work, and when he found Matthew Crisp awaiting his arrival, in a beaming condition which suggested recent experiments in connection with malt, he was too jaded to feel angry. "Matthew, what's the meaning of this?" he said with a slight smile, as he delivered up Kelpie into the hands of the faithful, if bibulous, servitor.

"Nowt, Mr. Arthur ; only I met an owd erony this afternoon—come up, Kelp, my bo-oy—and we ha' been having it out."

"And pouring it down, of course."

"Mebby so, Mr. Arthur. I took old Sedgeford's med'cine as you told me, Mr. Arthur ; and whether it's your med'cine or his wife's eternal clack, or the stoppin' of his beer, the parish-clerk and fisherman of Middleby sends word he's better. My conscience, but he's a strange customer ! For a dry-land poacher Golightly has nee marrow : but Sedgeford i' the water—I say Sedgeford i' the water. He's a reg'lar otter sir, a reg'lar otter."

"Not remarkably partial to the otter's beverage, is he, Mat ?" said the Doctor, disposed to humour the garrulous old fellow, "or he would not be on his back now."

"Jes' so, Mr. Arthur ; that's what it is. He does not know when to pull up. An' yet they do say he was one of the bigotedest testotallers in the whole country side till a matter of a year since, when he mislaid his almanack and got into trouble."

"Mislaid his almanack !"

"Tuk a fish out o' season."

"Oh! that was his trouble?" replied the Doctor; "but it wasn't with Sedgeford you laid *all* the dust, was it?"

"I'll come to that presently," rejoined Crisp. "Well, when I'd made the poor old chap as comfortable as I could by shoving his wife out of the room and turning the key—how *can* a man get weel when a woman like that tells him every minute of the day that he's a brute and sike like?—we got talkin' of fishin'. He was very curious about what you did in Scotland, so I sold him."

"Yon!"

"Ye-es; every big fish he mentioned I mentioned a bigger, and said you'd tuk it. Why, *I* know, Mr. Arthur. He never played a big'un in his life, though if they're *in* the river he'll have 'em somehow. I own that. He says he kittles 'em; yet whether it's a hand-net, or a prod, or a hedge-stake, he gets 'em. But him to talk about salmon rods! Yet afore they were so partick'ler about close times and sike like rubbish, no man was handier at tender-mouthed fry as him. Well, sir, I had talked him about dumb, and was just coming away, when, lookin' out of the window, I saw an old friend of ours."

"Ours, Matthew?"

"Yes, Mr. Arthur, ours. You reck'lect Ryan, the dealer (though for the matter o' that copin' was always more in his way than fair dealin'), that sell'd us Kelpie? 'Twas him, on his way frae Yarm Fair to deliver three nags he had parted with. You canna' help feeling a sort of respect for a man you have got the best of, and as I did him as clean as a whistle over Kelp here, Ryan an' me have been cronies ever since. Whea do you think the nags were for, now? You would never guess, Mr. Arthur. Why, one was for Barjona—"

quiet cob'—says Ryan, with a wink ; a good deal cawder than his teeth—there's no tellin' *what* you can do with the inside of a hoss's mouth till you try—and one as fond o' huntin' as ever a lad that has crossed him ; and t'other two for that nazzard Woodridge ; naebody else. They're rippin' cattle, 'specially onc, a chestnut mare, and I'se warrant she can travel. Pat has got his figure for 'em, and what do you think he tells me, sir ? why, that this Woodridge—whea wad ha' thowt it, now ?—is a wonder across country, and not to be sneezed at on the flat."

" And what are those horses for ? "

" Why, he's going to subscribe to the H. H., Pat says ; and he means to enter one o' his nags in the Welter at the meetin' on the moor next month. Mr. Arthur," added Crisp, meaningly, "*Enter Kelp, and ride him yoursel'!*"

" I will think of it, Mat," replied the Doctor, as he entered into the surgery.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONTAINS NOTES OF THE VISIT TO SCARBRO'; RENEWS CHEERFUL INTERCOURSE WITH SOME EARLY FRIENDS: ENDEAVOURS TO DEPICT A REMARKABLE MARKET-DINNER AT THE SURSINGLE ARMS; AND DESCRIBES THE DRAWING-UP OF ARTICLES FOR THE RETURN MATCH BETWEEN GREEK AND GREEK—OTHERWISE DOCTOR AND IRONMASTER.

FAITHFUL to the spirit of her promise, Sylvia returned with the Wilsons to Heatherthorp. In the course of a whispered conversation with Kate, as they were swiftly borne from Scarbro' by the evening express, she remarked that, "She dared say certain male members of the Vandervelde

family-circle were pining to shadows in despair at her prolonged absence—transcendental darlings ! But she had hardened her heart against them. She would remain by Kate's side until the comedy ' Doctor or Ironmaster ' came to an end. Had she not vowed to witness the confusion of parental despotism, the reward of chivalric love, and the subjugation of overweening ironmastery ? She had, and would ! ” Kate smiled at Sylvia's whimsical banter ; for she well knew the warm heart and steadfast will it concealed.

Thus far events had occurred precisely as Miss Vandervelde had predicted, and now the Squire himself was actually coming round. The return home did it—in this wise : firstly, there was his darling—still and ever to be his darling—pervading The Place with her sunshiny presence, and peopling its echoes with a voice whose every delicate note sounded *like* home ; secondly, there were his flocks and his herds, and his feathered tribes (Timothy Wilson, Esq., was a dreadfully enthusiastic amateur farmer) to welcome them in their peculiar fashion ; and thirdly, there was the enchanting sense of having bidden adieu to Scarbro' ! And he had further cause for comfort. It would have by no means harmonized with his newly-developed insensibility to what he was pleased to call “ girls' romantic rubbish ” to have pleaded guilty “ to the soft impeachment.” but Kate's behaviour at Scarbro' had afforded him much gratification. The place had agreed with Kate, and Kate with it marvellously. This was what Mr. Wilson saw, and it was fortunate for his peace of mind he saw no more. To tell the truth, our heroine was not exactly a free agent. Sylvia Vandervelde's volition—as the mesmerists say—took the place of hers, and unresistingly the softer-minded maiden did just as she was bidden. Enjoined “ to enjoy herself,” Kate floated

lightly down the pleasant stream of Scarbro' society as though unsympathetic fathers and banished lovers had never disturbed her happiness. Tears from the bitter spring of hope deferred were strangers to her eyes. "It was at her peril she ever wept," Sylvia said; "she was to keep her tears for the wedding"—and she kept them. When the old gentleman beheld this he hugged to himself the conviction that she had forgotten our friend the Doctor for good and all.

Nevertheless, while in the matter of his daughter's attachment it was from the beginning three to one against him and his hobby, he had become, what the betting men would term, a worse favourite as soon as ever the party reached Scarbro'. There, besides the meek, but none the less mighty, opposition of that one fair daughter whom he loved so well; the unresting artfulness of that one fair daughter's clever friend Sylvia Vandervelde; the image of the Doctor—glorified by the tender pencil of Absence into a splendid hero of romance;—the Squire had to contend against the influence of the Doctor's letters! Not that our hero violated so much as the fringe of that dreadful interdiction of epistolary correspondence. But he *did* write to Miss Vandervelde, and if she was pleased to pass the letters over to Miss Wilson before so much as opening them herself, where was the harm? At Scarbro', giving him the Doctor's absence in, it was (to again steal a phrase from Tattersall's) rather over three to one against the wrong-headed old gentleman's chance.

However, the Squire was home again, and but for one thing he would have felt supremely happy. He missed the Doctor. His back stiffened, his chin insensibly rose in the air, his lips closed with a drooping tendency at the corners when he chanced to meet his former favourite; but—he missed the

Doctor. And what greatly provoked the old gentleman was the impossibility of his keeping clear of the Doctor's influence. Everywhere he heard him spoken of, and always in the most cordial manner, especially by the common folk, by whom it was evident he was greatly beloved. "But there! what business had Doctor Sutton with *his* daughter?"

Matthew Crisp (thou shalt not be dissociated from the master, Mat), in his way, erratic though it was, likewise gained popularity. Yet it was not invariably given to the somewhat cynical Crisp to "win his way with extreme gentleness through *all* the outworks of suspicious pride!" The old fellow occasionally got into hot water. Until his advent the court of appeal for trying sporting questions had consisted of two members, Daniel Essom and John Golightly; Martin Sillery being occasionally permitted, on sufferance, to assist at the court's deliberations when these proved more than usually perplexing. But since Doctor Sutton came to the town, and especially since the match between Heatherthorp and Shipley, Crisp's arrogance—Essom affirmed—had become unbearable. As Golightly kept his tongue quiet, one may suppose that he entertained a slightly different idea of his crony's peculiarities; and as Martin Sillery talked anyhow (being a sagacious British landlord, desirous of maintaining amicable relations with every customer), Crisp's influence as a sporting oracle widened, Essom's proportionately diminished, and there arose a deadly feud betwixt the pair. Many stormy evenings at the Sursingle resulted from this odd rivalry, and divers encounters of a lively description elsewhere, even at Mr. Daniel Essom's shop, for Mat feared not to beard the barber in his own den, to the considerable rapture of the privileged frequenters of that politico-sporting sanctum. It came to pass at length that Daniel

Essom and Matthew Crisp fought tooth and nail whenever they met—snarled over every sporting subject that was brought to the surface by “the fine fluent motion” of their busy tongues. The last ounce which broke the not-over-broad back of Crisp’s forbearance was a remark of Essom’s which conveyed an ill-natured doubt of the Doctor’s prowess as a cricketer. From that moment the breach became unbridgeable. Now Nathan Barjona, the Quaker, occasionally witnessed the wordy warfare, and because he sympathised with Essom on the subject of church-rates, he (while piously reprobating the subject in dispute) invariably managed to side with Essom, and to sting Mat to the quick with his venomous comments. Crisp vowed to be avenged.

“Cross-grained old humbug!” muttered he, as he turned his back on Essom’s emporium one evening, after a remarkably energetic set-to. “Nasty, vinegar-mouthed she-man! All Quakers are she-men, every yan o’ them. I wish I had *my way* wi’ them, that’s all. I’d mak ’em stand on a leg. Flayed of feightin’ theirselves, except in a police-court about räates they ha’ just as much reight tee päay as onybody else, they’re nobbut a nuisance tit country. What for didn’t they *all* emigrate wi’ that Penn feller i’ Charles’s time?” And feeling all the better for his very North Riding soliloquy (the depth of his feeling could generally be measured by the breadth of his phraseology), he took a few steps in silence. Presently he resumed. “And that chap, Essom! Where did *he* get *his* larnin’ frae I sud like tee knaw? Nowt comes wrang tiv him.’ (Crisp’s vernacular was becoming broader and broader every moment.) “Cricket and racin’, fishin’ and huntin’, wrastlin’ and —politics! ’m—politics. An’ he *thinks* Mr. Arthur plays a fairish bat, does he? Wonderful kind o’ him to think sae.

Wonderful kind ! Thinks, though, he wad a'most back that Woodridge feller agin him, iverythin' else equal : WAD HE ? ” And Crisp smiled grimly. “ Has hard, tee, that Mr. Arthur can ride a bit on the flat. Mebby he can, Mr. Daniel Essom, *a little bit*. Has hard, tee, that Mr. Reginald Woodridge is a rare performer i' t' pigskin. Mebby he is ; mebby he is ; though he doesn't strike me like a chap wi' a Grand National cut about him. Then, Essom wonders if they canna' get up a match for 'em, eh, Crisp ? says he—a return, you know, Crisp, says he—looking at me. Not the least objection, says I. What new folly is this ? puts in Mr. Quaker ; I earnestly trust thy master is not about to engage in the cruel sport of horse-racing. Can't say, says I, because I generally allow my master to manage his own affairs ; but *some folks* has time for everybody else's business besides their own. Keep thy temper, says Barjona. So I shall, says I ; but if I had some folks' temper, I'd get shut of it at yance.—Nasty, crabbed owd beast ! And as for Essom——”

“ Hullo ! ”

“ What is the row ? ”

“ Divil a row at all, that I know of, Mat, my boy, worse luck. The company I've been kapin' 's not favourable to rows ; Quakers nivr foight—except on paper. And in that koin'd of foightin' they've not many aquils—accardin' to moi exparience, Matthew Crisp.”

“ Ah ! it's Ryan, I see,” observed Crisp, peering curiously into the gnarled face of the horsey-looking individual he had run against. “ What keeps you hangin' about here ? I thought you had gone lang syne.”

“ Faith, I almost thought so myself—till I was stopped.”

“ Stopped ! ”

"Nothin' less. P'raps it's my plasin' manners, or the tindherness of my heart, or bekase I'm ginerally mouldy for a dhrink, but somehow I'm always gettin' divarted out o' my natural coorse."

Crisp vouchsafed no answer; an involuntary gasp at the phrase "tindherness of my heart" alone betraying his notice of the horse-dealer's rhodomontade. Mr. Ryan, however, was dealing with an attractive subject—himself—and felt constrained to treat it worthily.

"I mint to be on my way south by this," continued he, in a wheedling tone, "but the Quaker persuaded me to stop."

"Him!" ejaculated Crisp, surprised out of his taciturnity.

"Divil a wan else," remarked Ryan. "Somehow, ridin' doesn't come aisy to him, Mat; and thin he's changed his gardener into a groom; and he wanted a wrinkle or two for himself, and a wrinkle or two for his gardener. Faith, if they were all wrinkles, like my gran'mother's face, it's not much they'd be makin' out in ridin' and groomin'; and my compassion was excoited, ye see, Mat, and so I stopped."

"Gammon!"

"Sure, and what was it you said, Matthew, darlin'?"

"I said gammon, Ryan—gammon. Happen ye know what it means?"

"And is it for the ould acquaintance ye are, Mat, to doubt my generosity—to a customer? Any way, Misther Barjona has thrated me handsomely, and why wouldn't I thrate him handsomely, too? Is it the likes o' the bit of dinner and the glass o' port afterwards, though, moind you, if anything in the world can bate a Quaker's notions of atin', it's his idays of dhrinkin', and the dhrops o' the crater in the evenin', that's goin' to weigh wid me at all? Isn't it the kindness?"

"Look here, Ryan," said Crisp, with severity, "if anything's took place sin' ye cam' here to mak' ye think me the biggest flat you ever met, talk on; if not, bottle up your blarney for Barnet Fair. You are not keepin' your animals here eatin' their heads off for nowt."

"An' is it for you, Mat, that's lived all your life wid them, to call horses animals? You might just as well call them pigs! Nivir fear about thim atin' their heads off as long as there's dacent nibblin' in Barjona's meadows."

"Oh!" breathed Crisp.

"And if you must know, I'm just stoppin' here for a quiet dale. I've a nate pair of hunters that'll suit Sir Harry Sur-single to a hair, and I want to see him to-morrow—market day."

"At Sillery's ordinary?"

"Yes."

"Good-night, Ryan," said Crisp, making a move; and then, suddenly seeming to recollect himself, he remarked: "By-the-bye, supposin' you had to handicap that mare you sold Mr. Woodridge the other day, and our Kelpie, for two miles over a fair steeple-chase country—none of your stone walls, recollect—how would you put 'em together? They're the same age, you know, and can both stand up."

"It depinds."

"On what."

"Who's gammonin' now, my boy? Bless your swate innocent self, Mat! Was it Bilsdale you were foaled in, or the county Kildare?"

Crisp disdained to reply.

"How would I put them together, is it? Faith, *just to suit meself!*"

"Why, you copin', swindlin', vagabone! do you think we

have nothing but ramping in our part of the country? There's a match between this pair—owners up—talked about, and, let me tell you, it will be on the square. *Now*, can you say how you'd handicap them?"

"Mat, there's nothing in it. If they met at even weights I'd take a shade of adds either way. I nivr lay adds; but if I did it 'ud not be on your masther's mount."

"Thank ye; that's all I wanted to know. Good night."

"Good night."

Before Doctor Sutton retired to rest he was in possession of the information Crisp had been at the pains to procure, namely, that Kelpie and Mr. Reginald Woodridge's new purchases were, in the opinion of the late possessor, as near a match as it was possible for two horses to be. "Not a pin to choose between them. Jockeyship would just turn the scale." A good many thoughts, somewhat associated with Woodridge, Kate Wilson, Kate's father, and a sportsman's honourable revenge, scampered through the brain of the Doctor as he turned in "to sleep on it."

If the chronicler has hitherto omitted to state that Heatherthorp sends a gentleman to represent its interests—whatever *they* may be—to the Commons House of Parliament, he hastens to remedy that omission. The borough, *as a borough*, obeyed the dictates of reason and the reigning property-owner, like the patriotic borough it was. Fortunately for the electors, they were not required to exercise what Mr. Daniel Essom termed the right of private judgment in the matter. Sir Harry Sur-single took care of that. Each election, however it might begin, ended in a walk over; and with a complaisance that did him credit, Sir Harry (in whose interest the candidate sported silk) kindly officiated as starter and judge, having previously

sent a trustworthy agent to superintend the weighing out. Essom denounced the whole affair as a monstrous farce; but then Essom was a radical, and radicals always were perverse impracticable people. A general election was pending at this time, and Sir Harry Sursingle, it was expected, would give the candidate a breathing at Sillery's ordinary. This was the occasion Ryan had meditated turning to account, with a view to a deal with the Baronet. A new man was coming forward to ornament the borough, a nephew of Sir Harry's, and the free and independent were expected to assemble in force at Martin Sillery's hospitable board, to allow their political pulses to be felt in the accustomed manner. Everybody was there; not necessarily to smile upon the tender senator's first plunge into public life, but because everybody was expected. If Sir Harry Sursingle had been a facetious and eccentric member of the P. R., and this his annual benefit, his friends could not have rallied round him more enthusiastically. It was by no means the new member that was to be who constituted the sole attraction. He indeed was such a poor creature, it was a positive charity to send him to Parliament, where he might haw-haw with other poor creatures as vapid as himself. No; it was the correct thing for Heatherthorp to rally round Sir Harry on such occasions, and Heatherthorp rallied. The social duties which devolved upon the guests were simple. Every ordinary feeder was required to dine heartily, drink freely, listen patiently, and retire without paying. Sometimes the diners above "the pale spectrum of the salt" broke out into set speeches; but to-day Sir Harry was not certain whether the colt who sat on his right had the heart to face a crowd yet, and therefore he deemed it prudent to say little or nothing about politics.

Among the group at the head of the board "might be noticed" (as the local journal observed on the succeeding Saturday) "Timothy Wilson, Esq., J.P., of The Place; Dr. Sutton, and Reginald Woodridge, Esq., of Shipley." The local journal forgot to include Mr. Essom and Mr. Patrick Ryan in its list of the company, but they were present nevertheless—Essom on the look out for subscriptions to the approaching race-meeting, and Ryan burning for a profitable deal.

Buz, buz, up and down the table moved the conversation, which, after the few political utterances from the founder of the feast, was tacitly allowed to mingle in Babel fashion: "Not a bit like his uncle, is he? What will he ride; ten stun seven?"—"Yes, t' iron trade's getting awful dull i' Shipley; and what I mean to say is, we've over much iron i' Cleveland and t' coal—" "Plenty of birds, though not much happin' for them tee year; but as I was remarkin' about sawing broadcast, which Sir Harry—" "I eased him in his work, and now the curb's got callous—" "We have good entries for the Welter and Wimpliedale Plate, and—" "I tell you it's the bishops that play the deuce with all reform; now just glance for a moment at——"

"Mr. Essom," pompously observed the Baronet, addressing the barber point-blank, and thereby producing a lull in the conversation, the company pausing to listen, "are the subscriptions to this year's meeting equal to those of last?"

"Scarcely, Sir Harry; but we expect a capital day's sport nevertheless."

"Ha—there's a—little fear of that, I think," replied the Baronet; "of course you reckon upon my hundred as usual?"

"Well, I must confess we *do* make so bold."

"Quite right; the cheque is at your service whenever you require funds to go on with, you know."

A murmur of approbation, mingled with one or two emphatic ejaculations of "Hear! hear!" greeted the baronet's announcement.

"And, haw," observed the Baronet's nephew, delighted at the opportunity of expressing himself on a subject he knew something about, "like to encourage old English sports and—haw—all that sort of thing; so—haw—you can put my name down for another hundred."

Sir Harry's approving "Bravo!" led an enthusiastic burst of applause. Former M. P.s for Heatherthorp had never given more than fifty.

"Speaking on behalf of the Committee," said Essom, rising, and unconsciously assuming the controversial manner of his youth and the Fleet Street Forum, "allow me to thank Sir Harry Sursingle, and the, I may say, honourable member on his right, for their munificence; and not only have the Committee, but the town—nay, the whole countryside—cause for congratulation at the possession of such noble sportsmen as the Chairman and the honourable member on his right. (Hear, hear! and applause.) Should their example be followed, as I trust it may, we shall then be able to carry out a long-cherished plan, and make the meeting on the moor last a couple of days. (Loud cheers.) And while I am on my legs, perhaps Sir Harry Sursingle will permit me to ask two gentlemen who are present for their assistance?"

"Most certainly, Essom," said the Baronet.

"Thank you, Sir Harry. The gentlemen I mean are Doctor Sutton and Mr. Woodridge. (Sensation—the rivalry of the couple was well known to the company.) They are rare

sportsmen (cheers), and—to make a long story short—they are known to be as accomplished in the saddle as they are with the willow. As they are ancient antagonists—no offence is meant, gentlemen; we have not forgotten the cricket match, you see (cheers and laughter)—and more than all, as they are known to be owners of nags of the right sort, perhaps, Sir Harry, you will help myself and Committee to put them together.” (Cheers.)

“By all means, Essom; by all means. What say you, Doctor? and you, Mr. Woodridge?”

“I have no response to make to such an unwarrantable proposal. I protest I am surprised Mr. Essom has not had the decency to mention the thing to me before proclaiming it in this public manner.”

“Essom’s too keen a sportsman for that,” observed the Baronet, laughing. “And what says Mr. Woodridge?”

Woodridge, who “fancied himself” and his new purchase, and was besides eager for another cut at the Doctor, replied with deliberation—

“I place myself and my mare in your hands, Sir Harry. If you can make a match, by all means do; I am ready.”

This plucky speech augmented the interest which the excited company already felt in the proposed match, and elicited a running commentary, the remarks, “That’s Yorkshire!” “Come, Doctor, dean’t shew t’ white feather,” rising distinctly above the hubbub.

The Doctor twirled his glass in gloomy silence. He had, as euphemistic sportsmen would say, “got the needle,” and that remark about the feather drove the instrument home.

“But supposing Doctor Sutton were to give his consent to the match,” said the Baronet, “what do we know about the horses? How are we to put them together?”

"I think, Sir Harry, I can——" commenced Mr. Essom; when Ryan, who sat next him, interposed.

"Allow me, Misther Essom, an' if his hanour the noble chairman 'll likewise allow me, I think I can help you out of this bother. Docthor Sutton knows me for several years past, and I have the hanor of Misther Woodridge's acquaintance. I owned both nags; and who would know better than meself how to put them together? If his hanour the noble chairman likes, I'll make the match, either for wan, two, or three moiles, owners up, I'll put the weight an' 'em and whin I done it—I'm not a rich man, gintlemen, but for a horsedealer, I hope I'm an honest wan (laughter),—an' whin I done it, I repate, I'll take any o' yees sixty to fifty wance, and wance only, about either o' thim. Now is that fair?"

"It is! it is!" shouted the company.

"Will Mr. Woodridge be satisfied with my handicapping?"

"Perfectly, so long as you satisfy Sir Harry of its justice."

"Will the Docthor agree to it?"

"Yes!" exclaimed Sutton, with energy.

"Then it's a match!"

CHAPTER IX.

CRISP TASTES THE SWEETS OF RIGHTEOUS RETRIBUTION; KATE AND SYLVIA LAY THEIR HEADS TOGETHER; BURROUGHS EXECUTES ANOTHER COMMISSION, AND THE DOCTOR RECEIVES A MYSTERIOUS PARCEL, TOGETHER WITH A BIT OF A DEVOUT YOUNG PERSON'S MIND.

MATTHEW CRISP felt somewhat dubious of the prudence of entrusting the handicapping for the match to the flexible bands of Mr. Patrick Ryan, but since he saw no chance of

mending the appointment of the horsedealer, he abstained from discussing it—except with the faithful recipient of his confidences, Kelpie. Was it a fellow-feeling that made him so mightily suspicious of the dealer? Perhaps. In Crisp's opinion, at any rate, Ryan's conscience, like the major portion of the worthy dealer's household goods, chattels, stock-in-trade, faculties, and blarney, was a marketable commodity, at the service of the highest bidder—obviously, in this particular instance, at the service of *any* bidder. Although it would have been monstrous to suppose Sir Harry Sursingle capable of countenancing the tricks of the crafty Irishman—in this wise did Mat continue to chew the cud of his bitter fancy—it was by no means impossible for the Baronet to be sweet one way or another about the match. How if he was fond of Woodridge's nag? Ryan had all along set his heart on a deal with the Baronet. Thanks to the administration of a copious and adroitly-mixed dose of Rynesque, composed of one part business and three parts blarney, he had contrived to obtain an invitation to the Manor, for the purpose of showing the pair of hunters he was prepared to part with at a sacrifice. Hearsay, in the person of Essom, averred the bargain was struck; and Vanity, in the person of Ryan himself, bore ornate testimony to "the wondrousful condiscinsion of the Bar'net's manners." Now—argued Matthew—Sir Harry and Ryan were sure to talk about the match, they could not help it; and if the Baronet *was* sweet on either Woodridge or Mr. Arthur, Pat, always remarkable for the strength of his eyesight, would see how the cat jumped at once, and (Matthew, for shame!) lump the weight on accordin'! How did the cat jump? Crisp brooded and brooded until he found a reply. In Heatherthorp Doctor Sutton, electorally speaking, was

nobody ; besides, votes were not required there ; but just outside the borough of Heatherthorp—that is to say, in his own parliamentary division of Smokelandshire, Mr. Woodridge was somebody. A warm friend of Sir Harry's was contesting the division wherein Mr. Woodridge ruled, literally with a rod of iron ; consequently to Sir Harry especially was Mr. Woodridge an object of interest.

To this effect, if not exactly in this fashion, Crisp meditated. He groaned inwardly. “ Ryan'll see which way th' cat lowps, and put 'em together tee fit.”

The keenest of sportsmen like their champions to have a bit in hand. Crisp was no exception to the rule, albeit Yorkshire enough to his stiff backbone to regard with the liveliest scorn a match, so-called, where one side has any number of points the best of it, and which is no match at all. And he gravely doubted Mr. Ryan. His knowledge of the morals of that ornament of Hibernian society was rather in excess of his admiration for them. “ But, hang it—Kelpie, lad, we're alive ! Nobbut let them give Mr. Arthur half a chance—just half a chance—an' he'll weather. I could get ower it if he cam' a cropper, or if thou, my lad, didn't stand up—but thou mun, Kelpie, thou mun, or we'se quarrel—I say I could get ower 't. But it would break my heart tee see him chopt at start. Weight 'll stop owt ! ”

Thus, on the third morning after the dinner at Sillery's, Crisp unburdened his soul. It was yet before breakfast with him, for at duty's call he had risen with the dawn to give his pet a taste of 'cross-country work. By-and-by Kelpie would leave for snug quarters on the wolds, for finishing touches at the hands of a famous schoolmaster, and, curiously enough, the Doctor was in daily expectation of being summoned

to the same neighbourhood to assist at a most important consultation.

Crisp had delayed his morning meal to have a look at the Heatherthorp, out that morning rattling the cubs about in one of old Wilson's covers. The squire, despite his being a gentleman-farmer of a tremendously fervid type, patronised field sports in an askant sort of way, and the H. H. were to honour him with a call that morning. But Crisp was not destined to see the young hounds blooded yet. While jogging leisurely along, exchanging notes with Kelpie, he heard the distant crunch of wheels, and glancing in the direction of the sound, descried a pony carriage which was apparently aiming for the same goal as himself. The vehicle contained Kate and Sylvia, and our heroine held the ribands. Sylvia had expressed a desire to see an English meet, but had recorded her veto against going thither on horseback. "It isn't as it used to be, my dear. Horses are horses now, neither steeds nor palfreys; they don't caracole or amble—they trot and canter and gallop. In fact, horsemanship in England is such dreadfully earnest business. I could always get on in Paris, where your speed is regulated by the police; but I should be sure to fall off here. Just conceive one of your energetic hunters or lively park hacks running away with me, and casting me goodness knows where. Into the Wimple, perhaps." Kate rallied her friend on her timidity (which really was a good deal assumed), but in the end agreed to put the pony-carriage into requisition, the more especially as the covert side was easy of access on wheels. "My word, but she is a thoroughbred 'un," muttered Crisp. "Where does she get it?"

"Good morning, Crisp," said Sylvia and Kate simultaneously,

when our heroine, obeying a nudge from her companion, had pulled up.

"Good mornin', Miss Wilson—an' the same to you, ma'am," replied he, with a beaming face. Then, instinctively starting a subject he suspected one of the young ladies would relish, he added in a tone which one would use to introduce a dear friend—"Kelpie, Miss Wilson."

"I see it's my old pet, Crisp," said Kate, slightly blushing—"rare old fellow! How well he is looking, too!"

"Though I say it as p'raps shouldn't, miss, he *does* look well, an' I'm main glad you tak' notice on it. He'd need look well, and be well, too, for what he'll have to do very soon, miss." And there was a touch of pathos in the old man's voice, not improbably suggested by a lingering suspicion of Ryan, that sounded inexpressibly droll. "Ah! he'd need look well, miss, for the weight he'll mebbly ha' tee carry," he added, muttering the latter half of the sentence to himself.

Here observe Mat's notions of conversational propriety. Miss Vandervelde was "ma'am;" Kate invariably "miss."

"We heard something about it," observed Sylvia. "Doctor Sutton and Mr. Woodridge are going to do something dreadful at the races. To gallop over hedges and ditches, and brooks, and walls, like a couple of wild huntsmen, Crisp."

"Not quite, ma'am," rejoined he, with a broad grin. Kate remained silent.

"Well, but you know this should be stopped. It is dangerous; very, very dangerous."

"Lor' bless you, ma'am—no-o—only to muffs. My Arthur's nae muf, whatever t' other yap is," he added, by way of aside.

"Persons get killed who practice this ridiculous diversion, this,—what do you call it?"

“Steeple-chasin’ ”

“Yes, steeple-chasing. Don’t they?”

“Why, happen they do. But that’s becos their time’s come. An’ if we are to go, ma’am, we may as weel go that way as ony other. Iv’e had my collar-boane brokken, an’ my shouther put oot; but I gat ower’t,” said Crisp, sententiously, essaying to soften the account of his calamities by putting it into the broadest possible Yorkshire.

“You *never* were killed, though,” flashed out Sylvia, with an air of triumph.

“No, ma’am, I can’t say that I ever was,” he replied with deliberation, as though the idea had presented itself to his mind for the first time.

“But,” interposed Kate, in a tone that plainly expressed her aversion to the turn the conversation had taken, “Kelpie can go across country—makes no mistakes—and Doctor Sutton is a good horseman!”

“*The* best in England, miss,” replied Crisp, emphatically; “and as for Kelpie, show me the hunter that can stand up or finish better than him!”

“What a wonderful master yours is!” said Sylvia, smiling. “Is there anything he cannot do?”

“No, I can’t say that there is; not to my knowledge, unless it’s a dishonourable action,” added he, with great simplicity.

“Capital!” ejaculated Sylvia. “You are a splendid servitor. You are worthy of—what shall I say?—the days of chivalry!”

Kate gave the old man a look that sent a thrill straight to his faithful heart, and he thought, “God bless her; she’s worthy of him.” He was about to give Kelpie his head, when Sylvia, whisperingly prompted by Kate, observed—

" Really, Crisp, judging from what you say, Doctor Sutton must be a famous horseman. What were his colours—colours is the word, Kate? I am such a stupid at these things—what were your master's colours when he was addicted to this—steeple-chasing? "

" Mr. Arthur's colours, ma'am, iver sin I can remember, were grey, wi rose hoops, and white cap."

" Upon my word, a charmingly delicate combination," replied Miss Vandervelde. " Hoops, too. You will think me a very ignorant person, Crisp, but I never so much as saw any horse-racing. I am dying with curiosity for a sight of one of your English race-meetings. And—yes—couldn't you let me see Doctor Sutton's colours, think you? "

" Easiest thing in the world, ma'am. I'll bring 'em to-morrow."

" And you need not say anything to Doctor Sutton about it. He would only laugh at me if he knew."

" All right, ma'am. Good mornin'; good mornin' to you, Miss Wilson; " and the old fellow, delighted with his mission, trotted off in great glce.

What evil genius prompted thee to exercise thy new hobby on that mo'ning of all mornings, Nathan Barjona? Obedient to the summons of a certain carnal-minded baronet, even of Sir Henry Sursingle, a troop of horsemen, clad in garments of unseemly device and intemperate hue were hastening to the covert side whilst thou wast preparing for two hours' peaceful penance in the saddle. Yea, even to the covert side, with hound and horn, with ribald jest, and barbarous haloo, to hunt to death the caitiff fox. Oh, Nathan !

Crisp moderated his pace after bidding the young ladies adieu, and presently ~~he~~ observed, approaching from the furthur ex-

tremity of the bridle road which he had entered—a short cut this to the covert side—his ancient plague the Quaker. “So,” said he with a joyous chuckle, “we have met at last, friend Nathan, and *not* in Essom’s shop! What a strange lump of a crock it is!” he added, and as the proportions (should not that word be changed to “conformation?”) of the Quaker’s steed became more defined, he felt that all the taunts he had received from the uneasy horseman were abundantly condoned. As he criticised Barjona’s timid seat—one peculiar to persons who have taken to horsemanship late in life—he stooped down to Kelpie’s withers, and laughed aloud. Limitless are the resources of the Milesian horse-dealer, who is a master of his art! “Well known in the Meath Hunt,” was the certificate furnished with the Quaker’s horse, when that fearful quadruped was disposed of by public auction during the infancy of Ryan’s professional career. Ryan bought him then, and since then had repurchased him goodness knows how many times, for he felt the same affection for the animal which an ingenious “articulator” may be supposed to have for a masterly specimen of *his* compound handiwork. The creature boasted as many *aliases* as the gentleman cricketer of the period; had played as many parts as a provincial comedian; and had been made up by processes not widely dissimilar from those practised by a Bond Street Mrs. Saddlechop—made up at an enormous profit to the artist, too, over and over again. How the angles of the Quaker’s nag were made to look like curves—veritable lines of beauty; how legs preternaturally substantial in the wrong place became clean and fawn-like; how stray hairs, suggestive of equine senility, disappeared; how molars lost the marks of advanced years; how purblind eyes once more gleamed with the light of colthood, spare us to relate. We could not if we would.

Suspect what you please. Pigments and grease, applications of the irons all round, tweezers, files and ginger. We are dumb. Just now the tough old phenomenon was playing the part of a cob, to the extreme discomfort of Barjona, whose equestrian education had scarcely begun.

"Poor old beggar," said Crisp, as he rapidly ran his eye over the angles of Barjona's nag. "He's got a varmint head on him that's a good deal owder than his mouth, Mr. Pat, or else I don't know *you*. An' I'll lay a wager, if he hears yon music,"—indicating the covert with a significant nod—"he'll mak' owd Barjona fadge a bit, seasoned as he is. T' music of a pack wad kittle his lugs a good deal more 'n owd Barjona's 'woa then! woa I tell thee!' Ise warrant. Mornin' sir."

"Good morning to thee," replied Barjona, in a tone which said, "I have had enough of this," as plain as it could speak. "The weather's warm for October, doesn't thou think? Woa! I say. I fear—woa!—I am not fully acquainted with this rebellious beast's idiosyncracies, friend Matthew."

"I knaw nowt about *them*, Mr. Barjona," said Crisp, contemptuously; "but if ye were to mak' yourself acquainted with the stean in his hoff hin' foot, it 'ud be better for him, an' ye tae."

"A stone!" exclaimed the Quaker, in alarm. "No? Wouldst thou mind dismounting? I was apprehensive that some harm had befallen the creature when I set forth; his gait waxed irregular." (A clothes-horse could not have been steadier.) "Thou art ingenious in all that pertains to the horse, Matthew—woa! wilt thou?—wouldst thou mind dismounting?"

Crisp tied up Kelpie to a gate that was handy, and set about relieving the Quakers's horse of the stone—which, it may be said, had no existence save in Mat's imagination. Sad to

relate, the over-sympathetic servitor meditated mischief and not succour when he so readily left his saddle.

Kelpie, from his sedateness, might have known what was in the wind. He looked on with an expression of almost human gravity as Crisp fussily pretended to relieve the Quaker's horse of the stone which incommoded the poor creature's off hind foot.

"And what might ye call him?" interrogated Crisp, by way of withdrawing Barjona's attention from the make-believe. "Ye've given him a neame by this, I suppose. Haud up, my lad!"

"According to Ryan, Matthew, the name he has been trained to recognise is Teddy O'Toole. From what source he obtained the indecorous—for methinks it savours of indecorum—appellation I know not. It is my intention—woa! wilt thou?—I say it is my intention, subject to the approval of the next Darlington Monthly Meeting, to name the beast after one of our own people, even after John Woolman.

"Ah! just so. Now I think we'll do, Teddy—I mean Johnny (subject 'tit monthly meeting). 'Show thysel', my bo-oy!" and Crisp anointed the quarters of the Quaker's steed with a couple of vigorous slaps, whereupon the mettled quadruped manifested an amount of liveliness that caused Barjona considerable discomposure.

"I—really—woa, wilt thou?—thou shouldst be more chary of thy blows, Matthew Crisp. Woa, I say!" roared out the Quaker, as the horse continued to caper about with augmented activity.

"Hoot, hoot, sir. He'll nivver addle his beddin', let aleane his keep, if ye dinnot wacken him up a bit noo an' then;" and Crisp smiled the smile of the melodramatic villain as he propounded this deep and horsey aphorism.

“Woa, I say!” again fairly shouted Barjona, perspiring in every pore with futile efforts to reduce John Woolman to a state of proper subjection. “The beast’s possessed! Little thought I when this morning I left my habitation—” Another caper, lively beyond all precedent, cut short the sentence, and completely knocked the breath out of the body of the terrified member of the Society of Friends.

The beast *was* possessed, only it would have required a third party to have specified with what. When Crisp so readily dismounted, he had devised a scheme whereby he hoped to cover his enemy with confusion, and that scheme was now working. We have already heard how, for economy’s sake, Barjona had converted his gardener into a groom. Now, notwithstanding all Ryan’s teaching, the stable floriculturist was yet a neophyte in the art of valeting a horse, and chiefly in the very necessary mystery of saddling. Although the peculiar angle of the withers of the Quakers Rosinante precluded the necessity for excessive care in girthing him, he nevertheless required to be girthed somehow; but (as Crisp admitted when subsequently relating the story) he had on that particular morning been girthed nohow. This fact, added to that of Barjona’s being as unsteady in his ill-fitting saddle as a farmer who is returning from market with his legs stretched, afforded Crisp an opening for his retributive essay he was not slow to accept. Mat did not spend many moments over the imaginary stone in that off hind foot, but transferred his attention to the girth. There, pretending to take in a reef, he managed to let one out, and at the same time to attach a bunch of prickly furze, which presently tormented the once mighty hunter’s belly every time he stirred, made him stir all the more, caused him to dance an irregular hornpipe, and filled Barjona’s

breast with anguish. There is a limit to the endurance even of horseflesh and blood, and the veteran Teddy O'Toole, who had in his day taken Irish banks and stone walls with the heart of a lion, and, subsequently, had not been cast down—irretrievably—during a hard experience alongside the pole of a Westmoreland coach, didn't like it. In fact (so far as his dumbness would permit), he said so. He kicked against the prieks, and shook Barjona the while until the unhappy Quaker was almost reduced to the consistency of blanc-mange. But Crisp's vengeance was not yet sated.

“The stone cannot have been removed—woa!—the creature's disquietude increaseth, Crisp. Verily I would descend—oh, dear! will he never keep still? I would descend, were he to calm himself for one instant, woa——”

By this time Crisp had remounted, and with the most aggravating composure was endeavouring, how successfully may be guessed, to calm the perturbed spirit of the resuscitated veteran. It was in vain. Presently he displayed a method in his madness. In a fretful, sliding canter, the pace of which momentarily increased, and of course stimulated thereto by the unseen bunch of furze, he bore the quivering Quaker, much to that gentleman's terror, in the direction of the meet. Crisp's eyes sparkled maliciously as now and then down the wind came the whimper of a hound, for he saw that the old horse felt it, and would require very slight encouragement to cause him to join the field. Gradually, for although the Quaker was speechless with his exertions, the horse had not broken out of his fretful style of locomotion, they approached the covert; and the noises therefrom increasing in number and volume, it only needed Crisp to play the good Samaritan in a loud-voiced ostentatious manner, and to occasionally take hold of the

horse's head, in order to make the beast ripe for flat mutiny. The supreme moment at length arrived. They had reached a portion of the road where the quickset hedge was stunted and broken—an easy leap, with a slight drop to follow. Down the wind again came the musical tongues of the hounds, this time a pealing chorus, deep, mellow, long-drawn out. Crisp, as though he could bear it no longer, gave Kelpie a slight touch of one persuader, and deftly pricked the Quaker's Bucephalus with the other.

Before Barjona could fairly realize the novelty of his position, his rare old crock—thrilled, it may be presumed, with the joyous sound that brought back the memory of happier days—was bearing him, clinging with all his might to all the mane, swiftly across a nice sound bit of grass, emphatically “rig and fur.” How he got over he himself never knew. The sweet little cherub that sits up aloft, keeping watch over Dibbin's matchless seamen, probably took *him* in hand. Crisp gravely waited until he saw Teddy O'Toole gently deposit his old plague upon the summit of a yielding mound of top-dressing ; and then, with a heart too full for the minor joys of the meet, he re-leaped the hedge, and returned to Heatherthorp. The homeward journey was broken by a solitary remark.

“ Kelpie, my lad, I wonder how the Quaker wad fräame tae argue noo ? ”

What caused our young ladies—Miss Wilson and Miss Vandervelde, to chat so animatedly, and laugh so cheerily, as they spun along the road to The Place ? The stilted old-world compliments paid them by Sir Harry Sursingle could scarcely have produced such an effect ; neither could the frank admiration of a group of ruddy-cheeked gentlemen-farmers and yeomen ; while the polite but inane conversation of the M.P.

that was **to be** had surely gone for nothing **at all**. Depend upon it they were plotting. At dinner it was just the same. Indeed, so hearty was their mirth, even the Squire wondered, and his wonder increased when, after dinner, in the drawing-room, they would talk about the forthcoming races : wanted **to know** all about the absurd match between Mr. Woodridge and Dr. Sutton (never blushing, mind, at the mention of these names), hoped he would take them to the races, no matter what sort of weather, and—now—*wouldn't* he ? There was a dear papa ! Yes, there was a charming Mr. Wilson ! Wouldn't he invite some nice people to The Place for the races ? Is it perhaps unnecessary to remark that they bewildered him into promising everything they asked ?

Next morning that long-suffering lady's-maid Burroughs "had her life worried out of her," as she with more force than elegance expressed it. She was enjoined to wait upon Crisp when he arrived, and immediately, to give them a parcel he would bring—immediately, recollect.

"Very well, 'm," said Burroughs, in high dudgeon. "I understand—*him*-mediately ; you shall have it."

Crisp came, and duly delivered the parcel, and it was conveyed to Miss Wilson's room "*him*-mediately." But Burroughs's troubles were not at an end for that day. She was requested to hold herself in readiness to proceed to Heatherthorp, and to return the parcel to Crisp—to Crisp alone, recollect. And while at Heatherthorp she was to execute a certain commission ; and, greatest insult of all (she was sure indeed ! Come up, now ! what did her mistress mean, **she** should like to know ?), she was not to linger by the way—to say nothing to anyone respecting the cause of her visit—and chiefly to avoid that long-tongued gossip, Mr. Essom.

Burroughs, however, succeeded in accomplishing all that was required of her, and was dismissed, the young ladies devoting the remainder of the afternoon to the joint cultivation of a headache in Kate's room.

In Heatherthorp just now there was little lack of topics for conversation. A good circumstantial independent lie there enjoys robust vitality for a calendar month and a lie that is founded on facts lasts for generations. Barjona was aware of the borough's most charming characteristic, and when he was affectionately asked how he enjoyed the run, and if he was going to have the brush mounted, and whether he intended entering his nag for the Welter, he groaned inwardly, and bemoaned the day he had incensed Matthew Crisp, who he felt certain, was responsible for that wretched ride across country. This was one topic.

Then there was another. Ryan failed to send in the weights for the match. Essom fidgeted a good deal about the horse-dealer's neglect, and with reason he wanted the bills out; besides, as he put it one night in the bar-parlour of the Sursingle, "It paralyses the betting. Admitting that Ryan had to look out some Irish matters and what not in order to put the horses together, *we*, as a race committee, ought not to suffer, and, as I observed before, it paralyses the betting." Nevertheless, the great Ryan remained dumb, whereat Crisp, who made daily inquiries, silently chafed, and predicted foul play.

One morning about this period the Doctor was preparing for his rounds, and, prior to mounting, was holding a professional conference in the surgery with Robson, when a neatly folded parcel, superscribed "Doctor Sutton," was placed in his hands. At that moment there was a ring at the house-bell, and looking out he saw it was Miss Cardmums.

"What the deuce can she want?" said he to himself. "Some dispensary business, I suppose. Mat, walk the mare about for the present. Tell Miss Cardmums I will wait upon her directly."

In years gone by Priscilla Cardmums had possessed a comely face and figure, at least report said so, and judging from the by no-means ill-favoured, though somewhat worn countenance that met the Doctor's gaze on his entry into the room, report had spoken the truth.

After the exchange of the customary conventionalities, she said, speaking in a low but distinct tone.

"Doctor Sutton, I am older than you—a strange expression this for a lady, you may think—and although a lady I claim the privilege of my seniority, to speak plainly to you."

"Whatever Miss Cardmums may be pleased to say shall receive my deepest attention," replied the Doctor.

"I expected nothing less. Under Providence, Doctor Sutton—and I have nursed others too long not to know the extent of my own danger during my illness—under Providence you saved my life, and,"—here the least flush of colour overspread her face—"since then I have taken an affectionate (you will not misunderstand me?) interest in your welfare."

"I can never sufficiently express my high sense of your regard, Miss Cardmums," said the Doctor, gravely.

"You are, I hear, about to engage in—horse-racing, and a very dangerous description of horse-racing; you are about to imperil a young and precious existence. Oh, Doctor Sutton! let me beseech you to forego this idle——"

"Miss Cardmums!"

"Pardon me if I use the wrong word; 'tis not to wound you,

believe me. Abandon this hazardous amusement. Promise me you will ! ”

“ I regret to say that I am quite unable to grant your request. My word is pledged.”

“ Break it ! ”

The Doctor made no reply.

“ There ! again I use the wrong word. A gentleman would not violate his pledge. But, tell me, is there no escape from this ? ”

“ None. Any other favour, Miss Cardmums, I should be delighted to grant, but this is beyond my power.”

She pursued the subject no further, but rose, and sadly bidding the Doctor good morning, was gone.

“ Eccentric old creature,” said the Doctor. “ I verily believe she would have wept had she stayed another minute. Poor thing ! It’s awfully kind of her after all. I could not chaff her, she was so distressingly in earnest. Now let’s see what’s in the parcel.

A daintily-folded, neatly-tied package, with the name, Doctor Sutton, in characters that caused the Doctor to start, and tear open the cover as though catching an express train depended upon his alacrity.

“ Whew ! my colours ! rose and grey and white cap. Worked by *her* hand too. Oh, my bonny, bonny Kate ! If Arthur Sutton don’t carry these colours to the fore his hand has lost its cunning, and Kelpie must know the reason why ! Miss Cardmums, had I known there were in this parcel such arguments as these for my going on with the match, I fear I could not have been as patient with you as I was. And *my* colours too ! *Not his.*”

CHAPTER X.

PATRICK RYAN, HORSEDEALER AND HANDICAPPER EXTRAORDINARY WRITES MR. ESSOM A LETTER, WHICH SINGULAR DOCUMENT PROVOKES FROM THE DOCTOR AND CRISP REMARKS OF A SWEEPING NATURE. THEREAFTER THE CURTAIN RISES UPON WHAT THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER AFTERWARDS VERY PROPERLY TERMED "THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY SPORTING EVENT THAT HAD OCCURRED IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD WITHIN THE MEMORY OF THE OLDEST INHABITANT."

THE day for the meeting on the moor drew near apace, and yet "the indefatigable and courteous clerk of the course" (indefatigable and courteous is the phrase for a clerk of the course, we believe, just as "intelligent and active," is the proper designation for a police officer) had not received a line from recalcitrant Mr. Ryan. As the horsedcaler's eccentric wanderings from Dan to Beersheba were not regularly chronicled by the *Morning Post*, Mr. Essom knew not where to address an epistle in search of him. According to a careful computation of the number of fairs which Ryan would probably visit on his way from Heatherthorp to Holyhead, the Milesian was then performing a series of experiments of an alcoholic character, with a view to taking the chill off his native Erin. A desperate notion regarding the transmission of four closely-written pages of clerkly indignation, superscribed "Mr. Patrick Ryan, horse-dealer, Ireland—immediate!" flashed across Essom's mind; but, on mature consideration, he arrived at the conclusion that the post office employés on the other side of St. George's Channel might experience some difficulty in discovering the whereabouts

of the wanderer, so he abandoned the idea, and—fumed. Hourly, to his sporting customers, who condoled with him; periodically, in deprecatory notes to Sir Harry (a steward), who replied in starchy notelets of thirty syllables each—as different from a natural note as a good shake of the hand differs from the languid presentation of two whalebony aristocratic fingers and one rigid aristocratic thumb; and nightly, in the committee room, at Sillery's, to the profound edification of the other members of the committee, who fumed in unison.

At length, Essom having waited for Ryan until his patience was quite worn out, the order was given for the majestic posters, in red, blue, and black ink, to appear. Gorgeously emblazoned upon the broad sheet were "the heads" of the events that were to form the two days' programme; but the great match, badly announced—"Match, 50 cash, p. p., owners up, steeple chase course," was enigmatical enough as an announcement to all but the initiated. Crisp wanted Essom to leave it out altogether, but that functionary replied, "No, sir. It's a line in the bill. Remember that—a line in the bill. You will excuse me, Crisp, but this a subject I *do* know something about. Those who were at the dinner will understand what it means. But whether they do or not," he added, with an air of rueful resignation, "there's no help for it. What *can* we say! Nothing. We must wait until that Irish blackguard, Ryan, takes it into his blundering head to write."

The expected missive came at last, bearing many outward and visible signs, in various regulation colours, of the devious route it had travelled, and the perils through which it **had** passed. Ryan wrote what might be termed a national hand, and as he conducted his spelling somewhat on phonetic principles, it was not surprising, when you came to think of it (only Essom was too

angry to make Christian-like allowances), that the address on the envelope should, first of all, have robbed the Blind Department at the General Post Office of a night's rest, and then nearly driven two provincial postmasters, one provincial postmistress of an irascible turn of mind, and a group of underpaid letter carriers to the verge of distraction. There are three Heatherthorps in this land of the brave and the free, and one Heatherley. The letter had been sent to each place, but as only one Heatherthorp—ours—contains a Daniel Essom, and as the mysterious superscription could, by a violent stretch of the vivid imagination of a Heatherthorpien expert, be made to express some of Mr. Essom and a portion of his business, that personage broke the seal, and read slowly and haltingly as follows :—

“Misther Essom, Sir, when I tell yees the imminse throuble this handyeapn as been aafter given me the days Ive, pondhered Over it an the noits I’ve dramed upon et shure, and as for slape there has bin none o’ that with et on my consheenee.”

[“The lying, hypocritical vagabond ? ” muttered Essom.]

“The First thing i did and dye moind I’ll be hanest in the mather wid ye when ye see the Barn’t long life to him ye’ll tell him, was to rite a bit av a letter to Misther Hector O’Halloran an as ye’re a sportin man ye’ve may be heard av him he’s clerk av the eoorse to the Hunt Meeting av the Blunderskull Blazers an be this an that sthrait ridin’ boys than the Blazers or boulder at a pailfull of red-hot punch haven’t the hanour of my friendship. Ses I to him ye remimber Hecthory my boy a steeplechaise over the new eoorse beyant whin my bay gelding Shamroek and a beautiful field was elaned out by a blayguard bay mare wid a bald faee and dishin’ action, the toime ses i to bring it to his moind d’ye see whin

white headed Moike the Blazer's whip presented ye wid several black eyes to take to bed wid ye—not that he did take them there for it was myself helped to carry him and its lively as a bag of sand he was whin I tuk compassion an him ses i in my letter.”—

[“What is the idiot driving at?” murmured Essom, in tones of distress. By this time he was lost in a melancholy state of bewilderment.]

“ses I in my letter an i had to be partickler in remindin’ him av the circumstance for he’s postmasther at the town convenient to the Kennels of the Blazers and has a good dale to occupy his attintion an ther’s not many postmasthers in the three kingdoms aquil to him an its meself that wishes he was here now to put me right about your direction Mr. Essom the half of et has gone out of my head intirely. You remimber Hecthor—]

[“Oh dear—dear me! when is he coming to the point?” moaned the distressed official.]

“You remimber Hecthor me boy that bawt a chesn’t mare I av the owner of the wan that bate mine—and a purtier rider across a stiff stone wall country I niver wish to see, he caught his death of cowl’d through putting too much wather in his whiskey poor darlin. Supposin ses I to Hecthor you had the ould mare wid the bald face and Shamrock and the chesn’t mare I bawt av the same party and another about six pound worse nor Shamrock a moile on the flat how would ye put em together over three moiles av country?”

[“So this is how Mr. Pat Ryan sets about handicapping the pair?” remarked Essom, bitterly. “I wonder if any of our handicappers work on his principles?”]

“I’ll be hanest wid ye, d’ye moind that now, O’Halloran an

me have been in wan or two honourable swindles they wor han-
 ourable ye see bekase they wor niver found out and as I always
 helped him wid his handicaps for a partickler raison he knew
 what my cattle could do. Well thin he wrote and sed. But
 let me come to the point Shamrock is the doctor's horse he now
 calls him Kelpie and the chesn't mare belongs to Mr. Woodridge
 and O'Halloran an me have come to the conclusion that the
 anly way to put em together to make a match av et would be
 the mare eleven stone, and Shamrock eleven stone ten. Dye
 moind now."

"Do I mind, you two-faced dealer in horse-flesh? Yes, I do.
 But stop, what's this—a postscript?" He read:—

"An ould friend of mine wan Michael Macarthy is most
 likely comin' your way about the time of the races. If you
 should see him, inthrouce him to Mr. Woodridge for my sake."

"Exactly. With much pleasure, Mr. Ryan. Indeed I will step
 out of my way to discover your old friend, rather than anyone
 else should have the honour of putting him and Mr. Woodridge
 together. And further, Mr. Ryan, I will not leave Mr. Mac-
 arthy during the meeting—if he should come, of course, and yet
 further, my dear sir, some of my money goes the way his
 does, or I know the reason why. You are clever, sir, very; but
 some of us in Yorkshire were not born yesterday. And now to
 inform the victim of this beautiful handicapping—and Sir Harry
 —of the result of Mr. Ryan's learned investigations."

It soon got wind that the doctor had to give his opponent
 ten pounds, and this bit of news, coupled with the rumour of a
 flattering private trial of Woodridge's horse with a well-known
 cross-country performer, had the effect of making the iron-
 master's champion favourite in Heatherthorp circles. Not that
 there was much hetting yet. There was plenty of money for

the doctor but his friends were content to wait before investing. Ten pounds was a good deal to give away if the pair were anything like equal, and the owners about alike in point of horsemanship.

Meanwhile one of the principal parties to the contract, who had received early intimation of the conditions under which he was to meet his opponent, had not scrupled to express his feelings on the subject in unmeasured terms. For the first time since his arrival in the town the Doctor had spoken his mind freely to Mr. Essom, and that functionary was now in possession of what might turn out to be a bit of highly useful knowledge. He knew the length of the Doctor's tongue. "And him so mild, too," said Essom that night in the committee room, elevating his eye-brows as he said it. "Still waters do run deep, and no mistake. He said it was a swindled and a piece of collusion, and, setting his teeth, said he'd be, d—d if he didn't defeat the whole lot of them yet! These were his very words as I'm a living man."

To tell the truth, the Doctor had exhibited temper when Essom placed the letter in his hands. And Essom, who was afraid the very significant postscript to Ryan's epistle might attract his attention, was delighted when he turned his back on the shop. The sagacious clerk of the course was more than ever resolved to back Woodridge. As for the Doctor he walked moodily homewards to talk the matter over with Crisp. He found Matthew in the yard fresh from a serious interview with Kelpie. He had heard the news.

"Well, Mat; they have done us! "

"No——o: I won't go so far as that, sir. It takes a wonderful deal of cleverness to win a race now-a-days. Man fowk than t' judge can shove a word in."

"Ten pounds is a lump of weight to give away. That rascally Irishman as much as said the form was equal."

"So he tell'd me, Mr. Arthur."

"Offered to take sixty to fifty either way," said the Doctor, gloomily.

"He did?"

"Yes, that was at the dinner; and I stood him, Mat."

"I had a better opinion of you, Mr. Arthur. I hardly thowt a hunder-handed runny-country Irishman like that could ha' got ower ye. Besides, you knew he was a coper; you knew how durably he tried to get thirteen pence for his shilling out of us about Kelpie."

"I deserve *all* your reproaches, Mat; every one. Now I should not wonder but what he's sent out a quiet commission to back Woodridge?"

"It's goodish odds on *that*, sir,—oh, yes! it's goodish odds on that. Trust the vagabone to help hissel."

"Ah—just so!" said the Doctor, meditatively. "Although, mind you, I cannot blame him, Mat. It serves me jolly well right. I ought to have known better. But I must go on with the match: it would be disgraceful of me to give it up now."

"Mr. Arthur, if I thowt you were goin' t' show t' white feather to that yap, Woodridge, I'd leave, sir—and I did hope to stop wi you as lang as I was yabbel to put yaw leg afoor t'other. Give up the match! Niver i' this world. Niver mind the ten pund, sir. A good jockey is worth at least seven pund ower a bad un ony day it year, and we'se hope Kelpie can make up for t'other three. Give up the match! It ud brek my heart. Then look here," he added, coming to business; "the country wants doing. It isn't big, nor is it out of the

common, but it wants a lot o' doing. Mr. Arthur, you mun win this match ony how. Kelpie's blooming, think o' that—and he's nee cocktail."

"Neither am I!" replied the Doctor, vehemently, as the remembrance of Kate's graceful gift flashed through his mind. He was about to fight under *her* colours. "Win I will if I can. And now we must hasten with our final arrangements. You have not forgotten my orders?"

"I have not, Mr. Arthur."

"I must leave Heatherthorp this afternoon. I have been called away to another important consultation—you understand?" And the doctor bestowed a meaning glance on his faithful servitor.

"Robson knows the nature of the case, and if any of my friends are particularly anxious for information, refer them to him. Very well; you must follow with Kelpie to-morrow. By leaving early in the morning and coming to me by road, you will be able to return to Heatherthorp in the evening by the express. It isn't that I care a pin for the pharisees; but if you are seen about as usual, Mat, the Woodridge party won't suspect the nature of the consultation I have been asked to attend. Meanwhile, before my return, you can try the line yourself with the mare, and when I come back we can do it together. They think they have got me in a nice tangle with their Irish handicapping, but they'll find that I mean to die hard. I need say no more, Matthew; I am sure you are quite awake to what I want."

"Leave that to me, sir."

"Oh! by the way, if there's any of Woodridge's money about and they are anxious to lay anything like seven to four, or two to one on him—it can hardly be that, you know, Crisp, in such

a match as this—accept it, and I will take the bets off your hands.”

“ All right, sir.”

“ And now, let’s have a look at the old chap before I pack up for this consultation. I know you have done your best by him—for if ever man loved horse, you love him, I am sure, Mat—but I have been so much engaged lately, I have not had an opportunity of doing your polishing justice.”

Nothing could have given Mat greater delight than this request, and the Doctor put it in such a way as to reach the old man’s heart of hearts. Crisp might have been the poet of Andersen’s charming piece of extravagance, and Kelpie Pegasus himself, while from the exultant manner in which he hastened to gratify the Doctor’s whim, the pair might erewhile have held Olympian converse. Kelpie, as has already been said, was a rich bay with black points, and no moment could have been more propitious than this for showing his beautiful colour to the best advantage. As the warm light of the setting sun fell upon his shining coat, the doctor thought of another sunset, earlier in the year, when that coat had glistened even more gloriously—when the gallant creature was urged along the steep bank of the Wimple to save Kate Wilson from being dashed to the earth.

“ My word, Mat, but you *have* done your duty ! ” ejaculated the Doctor, as he walked round Kelpie admiringly.

“ Well, sir, if they can put a better polish on theirs, I’ll give in,” replied Crisp, in the seventh heaven of delight at the compliment, which, let it be said, was really deserved. “ He’s not exactly cherry-ripe yet, but we’s fettle him up afore the day : won’t we, old boy, then ? ”

Kelpie was a long way better than he looked. Not quite

fifteen two in height, the truth of symmetry throughout made him appear less than he really was. His light, intelligent head, full eye, and muscular though straight neck—which filled the hand as you grasped his crest—was well placed on long, oblique shoulders, which combined with wonderful depth of girth to throw the saddle far back upon what seemed therefore and by reason of his great spreading hips, a rather light loin, although really it was anything but that. A drooping goose-rump also detracted from his appearance, but in no way interfered with the grand length from hip to hock—the power of quarter and second thigh he displayed. Good all over when you took him to pieces, especially good was the bonnie bay “to follow.” Not a point escaped the Doctor. Never since he had become the proud possessor of Kelpie, *alias* Shamrock, had he run the rule over him with so much anxiety.

“Old fellow!” said he, affectionately, as he patted Kelpie’s neck, “you are made of the right kind of stuff, and if between us we can’t do it—why I think I shall never wear silk or scarlet more.”

“Hoot, hoot, Mr. Arthur! that wadn’t be doing him justice. See how he turns his head, as if he knew what you were saying. If this Woodridge mare—and she’s a viewly thing, and can gallop—beats Kelp at ten pund, an’ they’re both of an age, she’s a clinker, that’s all. But we’s not be beaten, Kelp, owd lad? I say, if Woodridge mear be cleverer than thee, and has a better heart iv her belly, why then we’s be beaten. But we are not beaten yet, owd varmint head!”

“Faith like yours should be rewarded, Matthew,” said the Doctor, laughingly, as he turned to re-enter the surgery. “I shall see you to-morrow; good-bye till then.” The Doctor departed on that important consultation; Matthew Crisp joined

him next morning with Kelpie; Matthew Crisp returned to Heatherthorp *without* Kelpie, and Heatherthorp was none the wiser.

Few events so completely rouse the dormice of a country town as a race meeting. A bazaar, no matter what high and noble object in martyrdom, missions, or monastic furniture the Berlin wool-workers and their coadjutors have in view, does little more than stir in its sleep a borough like Heatherthorp. An eruption of bazaars, extending over a season of three or four months, might perchance induce the burgesses to yawn and stretch themselves and ask what it all meant; might possibly exhaust the sweet facetiousness of the youthful brethren who come out so strongly as amateur Cheap Johns and counterfeit auctioneers; but no such eruption ever afflicted our borough. We could not have borne it. We keep our pulse at the proper mean by partaking of a judiciously-blended course of mild dissipation within doors, and an occasional indulgence in games and field sports without. The chief events of the year are a cattle show, a bazaar in aid of the Establishment, a great game at bowls for a dinner and a handsome piece of plate—electro plate—three presentations of testimonials, a bazaar in aid of the Primitive Ranters, an alcoholic municipal election, a teetotal festival, in festivity limited, ten teetotal “experience meetings,” in talk unlimited, five home-and-home cricket matches, a lecture on the horrors of American slavery, by an African Prince who manifested his love for this land of liberty at a remarkable early period by arranging to be born in Whitechapel, one uproarious otter hunt, occasional symptoms of “scarlet fever” in the hunting season, a band contest, and the races.

It is, however, given to the races to fully develop the latent commercial, social, and—shall it be said—polemical virtues of

the borough. To board is a great pecuniary undertaking in Heatherthorp during the reign of Mr. Daniel Essom, but to bed is a greater. This is owing to the saints. Not content with flooding the borough with imaginative tracts, distributed by able-bodied missionaries (who take their stand where they can obtain a good view of every race), the devout flee from Heatherthorp; the virtuous let their habitations to the vicious for a "consideration;" the Israelites despoil the Egyptians of their precious metals and paper. The sportsman who has been in like fashion entertained at Chester, Chichester, and Doncaster, can readily discover that he has lodged beneath the roof of an absent Heatherthorp saint; he remembers the moral precepts in a black frame that frowned on his waking hour; he recollects the aged domestic whose face it would have been a flight of fancy to term plain; he shudders at the memories of her puritanic cookery; and he will never forget the length of his bill. In good sooth the person whose hobby is a horse, and a racehorse—who is "fond of a bit of racing"—pays dearly for his whistle; with which delightful confusion of images we pull up.

At Wimpledale Place they felt quite as much interest in the forthcoming Meeting as was experienced down in the town; and, *maybe*, rather more interest in the match between Arthur Basinghall Sutton, Esq., M.D., and Reginald Woodridge, Esq., ironmaster, Shipley. After Squire Wilson had been cajoled into consenting "*to* have some people" (a delightfully vague *way* of putting it) during the race week, the girls let him rest, but the time had now arrived for making the necessary arrangements on their part. It was Saturday, two days after the morning on which Essom had his mind eased by Ryan's letter. Mr. Wilson was making his accustomed after-breakfast

round amongst the live stock, and Kate and Miss Vandervelde were laying their heads together, in company with the local paper which Sylvia lazily pretended to read. The breakfast-room at The Place was as cozy an apartment as one need wish to put slipper into, and just now all aglow with a North country coal fire, and animated in the most delightful sense of the word by the presence of two pretty girls, it looked its brightest. Kate was herself again; the careworn expression was gone; and Sylvia, thanks to some of the out-door exercise which in country quarters is inevitable, had lost that peculiar resemblance to a natty little figure of Sèvres which distinguished her when we first made her acquaintance in the summer.

“There is nothing in this stupid paper that I can see, Kate; there never is anything except accounts of ploughing-matches; parish meetings, and serious accidents to persons who cannot drive. Yes, there is sporting intelligence. I almost wonder why you take such a paper, Kate; but I suppose you must. It is expected of you, like subscriptions for soup, and coals, and blankets for the poor.”

“You must not be severe, Syl; I am sure the paper is very good of its kind.”

“And extremely kind of you to say so, Kate; not that I intended a pun. But that is not much in its favour, ‘Good of its kind;’ why you agree with me.”

“Try the sporting news, then; there is sure to be something about our races. Let me see the paper.” And Kate laughingly attempted to snatch the journal out of Sylvia’s hand. That young lady, retreating with mock gravity, observed—

“No, Mademoiselle, you have dared to impugn my opinion of provincial newspapers—your newspaper; I will show you that the sporting is just as stupid as the rest of its dreary contents.

Listen. 'Heatherthorp Autumn races—Application for sites for booths and stands to be made on or before Wednesday next the twenty-second inst. to Mr. Essom, Clerk of the Course.' There, Miss Wilson, that is something about our races; and a most interesting piece of news it is. Here is something else: "Sporting Match across country. We'—what a dreadful person the we with a large W is, Kate!—'We' (with a large W) 'are in a position to state that the sporting-match between Doctor Sutton's,—Kate, this *is* interesting!—'bay horse Kelpie, and Mr. Woodridge's chestnut mare, Blouzelinda,'—what an odd name!—'about which we informed our readers in our last impression, has been finally arranged. An eminent Irish handicapper has apportioned the weights,'—what's apportioning the weights, Kate?—'but some dissatisfaction has been expressed by the friends of Doctor Sutton, in consequence of the handicapper's having arranged for him to give his antagonist ten pounds.' What a shame? Why *should* Doctor Sutton give Mr. Reginald Woodridge such a sum of money?"

"You have not finished," observed Kate, who had listened with a surprising amount of attention.

"No; here is some more of it: 'As will be observed in another column, the weights are, Kelpie, eleven ten; and Blouzelinda, eleven stone. Our Shipley correspondent reports much excitement in that town over the match; and there is also great interest felt with regard to the affair at Heatherthorp, where Doctor Sutton is exceedingly popular. There has, thus far been little betting; but Mr. Woodridge's mare may be pronounced favourite, six to four having been laid on her several times in Heatherthorp soon after the weights were known.' Well, Kate, one sometimes reads with the eye and not with the brain, when the wits are wandering. I have been trying

to read with both, and with my wits, such as they are, too, but—I am bewildered. Doctor Sutton has given Mr. Woodridge ten pounds—they have laid six to four on the mare—what does it all mean ? ”

Kate looked remarkably serious, and did not reply.

“ Why, my dear, one would imagine, by your dear melancholy face, that something very distressing had happened. If Doctor Sutton chooses to let them take his money, what is it to you ? When you are married you will cure him of his folly. Why, I do believe you are going to cry ! ”

“ It is very silly, I know ; but—but—but I can’t help it ! ” sobbed Kate, fairly breaking down. “ You d—d—don’t understand these things, Syl—via.”

“ My darling,” said Sylvia, gravely, “ you must not give way like this. Come into my room and tell me all about it. What would your papa think if he saw you sobbing fit to break your heart ? ”

“ It’s over now,” replied Kate, drying her tears, and heaving a remarkably heavy sigh. “ Don’t laugh at me, Sylvia,” she added, kissing her friend ; “ I never was so weak before, and I never shall be again, depend upon it.”

“ Very well, my dear ; that is a sensible resolution : and now that your face is restored to its original length, and you appear capable of speaking without making mincemeat of your words, please help me to be as wise and as miserable as yourself. What were you crying for ? ”

“ Why, Sylvia, as I told you before, you don’t understand racing. I don’t much ; but last year at Scarbro’, before I knew Arthur”—and she blushed quite prettily—“ we used to see a good deal of a Captain Mervyn. He was very fond of horse-racing. Indeed, I don’t mind telling you, Sylvia,”—and her

eyes twinkled merrily—"that (we flirted desperately) he used to make love to me in the language of the Turf. It was so funny ! "

"I have no doubt of it, Kate ; I think I should have cured him of his passion for sporting idioms, though. And——"

"He told me all about racing ; and although I have forgotten nearly everything he said, I know that Arthur has been shamefully used in this match." And she spoke with energy.

"How, my dear ? "

"That ten pounds which puzzles you means weight, not money. Kelpie has to carry that amount of weight more than Reginald's horse ; and as the horses are the same age, Reginald may win—and I don't want him to win ! "

There was the least suspicion of tremulousness about her lovely lips ; and Sylvia, fearing another shower, hastened to interpose.

"Why, Kate, I am ashamed of you. *He* would be ashamed of you if he saw you now ; I am sure he would. Sooner than that hateful Woodridge triumph a second time, I would do something very improper and unladylike myself. Go and frighten his horse, or get the groom to poison it, or—he shan't win ; I have said it." She uttered the last phrase in a tragic tone and a manner perfectly irresistible. Kate laughed outright.

The Squire re-entered the apartment at that moment, and the conversation came to an abrupt termination. He was unusually good-tempered. A porker of his own breeding, the elasticity of whose cuticle he had been for some weeks testing by means of a condiment of his own inventing, had been dispatched to the happy grunting-grounds the day before. Mr. Wilson had just seen the over-larded monster weighed ; and as

the weight had much exceeded his expectations, he was happy. Kate saw that he was in a promising mood; and, having interchanged glances with Sylvia, she at once broached the subject of the festivities of the race-week. Miss Vandervelde artfully followed suit, and presently Mr. Timothy Wilson found himself consenting to everything they asked—and their demands were rather exorbitant. Still, to preserve appearances, he felt he must suggest an obstacle or so, and, accordingly, stiffening himself in his chair, he exclaimed—

“Stop, stop, stop! not so fast, young ladies, if you please. We must draw the line somewhere. You can do what you like with the guests when they arrive here—dine them, dance them, or what you please. Only take all the trouble off my hands; and don’t ask too many people.”

“You are such a kind papa!” said Kate, kissing him.

“And there is another restriction——”

They waited for him to proceed.

“I’ll have no Doctor Sutton here. Remember that!”

Kate’s countenance fell immediately, and she looked ready to burst into tears. She had meditated bringing about a reconciliation between her father and the Doctor. But Sylvia was equal to the occasion: she rose, and advancing to Mr. Wilson, said—

“Mr. Wilson, if Doctor Sutton is not to be included in the people we—that is, you invite to The Place, I pack up and leave at once. Doctor Sutton is a friend of mine—he is my medical adviser—and, if you consult my pleasure, you will ask him to come. I await your answer.”

She stood before him with her hands demurely folded, and her eyes cast down—the very personification of meekness. He gazed at her for a minute, and said—

"Sylvia, you are a strange girl. He shall come, of course—as your friend." He rose and left the room saying, "I wouldn't be that girl's father for kingdoms!"

So it was decided that the girls were to have *carte blanche* in everything, even with regard to the people to be bidden to The Place. Twice had Timothy Wilson, Esq., been defeated by Miss Vandervelde in Kate's behalf; would she be triumphant in the third attempt?

CHAPTER XI.

CONTAINS A CIRCUMSTANTIAL ACCOUNT OF THE FAMOUS MATCH FOR A HUNDRED A SIDE BETWEEN DOCTOR SUTTON'S BAYHORSE, KELPIE, AND REGINALD WOODRIDGE, ESQUIRE'S, CHESNUT MARE, BLOUZELINDA, TOGETHER WITH OTHER MATTERS RELEVANT TO AND ARISING FROM THAT ENTHRALLING EVENT.

"MAT, they tell me thy maisther's gannin' tee ride a match wi' that Woodridge o' Shipley," said umpire John Golightly, to our friend Crisp, on the morning after the bills were published. Crisp was jogging hom with Kelpie's stable companion, Widow Malone, after treating her to a canter over the course.

"And they nobbut tell thou what's true, Jack," replied Matthew with appropriate gravity.

"Verra good. Now harks' thou, Mat—theer's naebody aboot—I'm summat hard up just noo; but I mun back the doctor if he has a chance. Has he?"

"Yes."

"Rosy?"

"No."

"Why, what's thou been aboot, Mat?" asked Golightly opening his eyes to the fullest extent, in sheer wonderment.

"Didn't they ask *thy* advice before making the match? how that thou did not crab it right off?"

Briefly, but gloomily, Crisp related the legend of the wager; indignantly and *not* briefly, commented on the artful dodge of Mr. Patrick Ryan. Golightly spared not his condolence—nor proofs of his native prudence.

"Friendship is friendship, Matthew, but niver a friend in the wide world wad persuade me to back owt that hadn't a chance. That yap, Essom—he *is* our secretary, thou sees, Mat, and I'm in a manner bound to be civil to him—offered to lay me two to one again' the Doctor. I dinnot think, after what thou's tell'd me, that thy maisther's gotten much prospect of pulling it off; but I shall take Essom's two to one nane the less. Accidents 'll happen i' steeplechasin' as well as i' cricket, and mebbey there'll be sike'n a thing as hedgin' to a profit on the day."

"Please thysel', Jack," rejoined Crisp, "please thysel'. We can ride a bit, remember; and we'se try all we know. Dinna forget that."

"All right. I shall tak' his two to one. Ta, ta!—Oh, isn't that the nag he means to run?"

"Noa!" replied Crisp, in a tone the least bit contemptuous "This in't mear. He can give her a stean and a beatin'—ony distance!"

"Why, thou dissant saay so? He can, can he?—Then I SHALL tak' that Essom's two to one. Ta, ta!"

And Mr. John Golightly straightway proceeded to the shop of the Leviathan of Heatherthorp, there to have booked two to one against Kelpie—in crowns. It is needless to remark that the stone and a beating to which Crisp had so nonchalantly

adverted existed solely in his fertile brain ; it was literally a flight of fancy. Kelpie and the mare had never been tried together since they came into the Doctor's possession ; but Mat plainly saw (or fancied he saw, which amounted to the same thing) that it was not improbable his master would fall a victim to the machinations of Ryan and company, so he made up his mind to a little scheming on his own account, with the laudable intention of beating the conspirators at their own game. Mr. Arthur was too honourable for 'em, but not *he* ! *Only wait*. Intuitively he knew that Golightly would banter Essom—after the Leviathan had booked the bet—and he cunningly suspected it would come out in the course of the wordy encounter, that Kelpie could give Widow Malone one-and-twenty pounds (Jack would never stop short at a stone !) and beat her out of sight ! Making the utmost allowance for the unbelief of the talent assembled within the walls of the local subscription rooms, Mr. Golightly's mild assertion would, he was sure, make Kelpie a better favourite. When the price shortened, Crisp would be prepared with another card, and—another ; so that, win the match or lose it, he would touch some of their coin. On that he was resolved.

The little fiction which Crisp had contrived was promulgated, as he conjectured, by Golightly, with “ illustrations and additions ; and it produced the anticipated effect. Kelpie became a better favourite. The Leviathan declined now to offer more than seven to four against the Doctor's champion. Crisp chuckled when he heard of this change in the betting, and felt strongly tempted to saunter down to the Sursingle Arms himself, for the purpose of adding still further to the perplexity of Mr. Daniel Essom and his speculative following. On mature consideration, however, he decided to remain away ; he might

—there was no telling—be drawn into saying more than was prudent, and anyhow it would be better to keep his whip still until the Doctor's return to Heatherthorp.

Touching whose absence there were many rumours, and some of them not very wide of the actual truth ; for latterly his reputation as a sportsman had in some sort overborne his right to be deemed “ a good young gentleman ” (the appellation first bestowed by Miss Priscilla Cardmums—while it nearly equalled his celebrity as a medical practitioner. Barjona, urged on by Essom, made it his business to wait upon Robson at the surgery, to enquire about the case that had called Dr. Sutton from Heatherthorp. It would have been more conducive to the comfort of the man of frigid morals and rigid collars if he had remained at home. Amiable Mr. Robson was simplicity itself. He *knew* as much about the real cause of the Doctor's departure as Barjona ; and he suspected nothing. Accordingly when the Quaker, ungratefully declining to indulge Mr. Robson with a sight of his tongue, put the question which Essom had inspired, Mr. Robson simply repeated the answer which his principal had provided. A voluminous technical description of an imaginary malady, and a similarly fanciful enumeration in professional phraseology, of the remedies that had been vainly applied—both bewildering beyond expression to Barjona—were all that estimable member of the people called Quakers, got for his meddling. Yes, Mr. Robson gave him some advice. This was more disconcerting than he would have cared to own. Barjona had never felt so much “ above himself ” as he did when he put his foot inside the surgery ; now he was almost ill ! He turned suddenly on his heel, thereby bringing Mr. Robson's well-intentioned professional homily to an abrupt termination, and it was only the recollection of what he owed

to society—that is to say, to the Society of Friends—which prevented his giving utterance to a Friendly equivalent to a rousing expletive. Ill! he never was better in his life. Ill!

Crisp saw the Quaker enter the surgery, and as he had not had an opportunity of exchanging a word with him since the morning Teddy O'Toole (otherwise, and subject to the approval of the monthly meeting, John Woolman) bolted and got rid of his rider, he thought the moment opportune for a renewal of horsey greetings.

“Thy Master remains absent longer than was anticipated, Matthew?” remarked the Quaker, in an interrogatory manner.

“Does he now?” responded Crisp, promptly.

“Doesn't he?”

“Depends upon what ye anticipated, Mr. Barjona. For my part I have never troubled my head about it. But then I doant need him; how ill *you* look, though! That hunter o' yours is ower mony for ye, sir. But what am I talking about? I hear you are going to subscribe to the H.H. Now that's hearty and liberal. Did you hear about our match? I suppose you'll have a bit on; I am sure Mr. Arthur would back you if you entered Teddy O'Toole in the Wimple Cup, and steered him yerself! Now there's——”

But the Quaker had vanished; driven from the field by a tongue which upon one subject at least was more caustic than his own. In his heart Barjona banned the hour when, in view of his too rapidly augmenting rotundity, he, allowed by Ryan and Teddy O'Toole, resolved to witch the world with noble horsemanship.

“That night saw Crisp at the railway station awaiting the arrival of his master and Kelpie. He had ridden over beside the driver of the Sursingle omnibus, and had favoured that

cross-grained but sporting handler of the ribbons with what he was pleased to term the straight tip about the forthcoming match. The driver was happy. He comported himself accordingly; and his weather-mottled visage, as far as it could express anything, told the world of Heatherthorp that the proud possessor "knew something." It is true that he knew nothing at all; but Crisp had bidden him keep his money until the day; and was not *that* significant? He had only to remark when he returned to the kitchen fire of the Sursingle, that he had had Doctor Sutton's man with him on the box all the way to the station, to add that they had talked about nothing but the match, to thereupon mutter something about reserving his investment until the day, and to sapiently shake his head, in order to convince his hearers that he was a very well-informed person indeed, up to the hilt in the confidences of the Sutton stable.

"Look sharp with that horse-box there!" cried the station-master, as the last train entered the station. "We are five minutes late. Good evening, Doctor Sutton. I hope I see you well, sir."

"Perfectly well, I thank you. Ah! Crisp," continued he, in a cordial tone, "you will look to Kelpie. Mr. Heston here—you know him—will lend you a hand. Anything new?"

"Barjona's called to see you. They *only* lay seven to four again' you.—But they'll lay more yet," he added to himself.

"Ah! I shall patronize the 'bus. Let me see you for a minute or two before you go to bed."

The Doctor took a place in the omnibus, and Crisp, accompanied by Mr. Heston, the schoolmaster under whom Kelpie's steeple-chase education had been perfected, looked after the horse-box, which—as on a former never-to-be-forgotten occasion—contained a couple of nags.

"Whew!" whistled the somewhat amazed Matthew, when the pair had been safely landed and stood side by side. "I couldn't ha' thowt it."

"What are you whistling and muttering there for?" growled Mr. Heston, evidently not favourably impressed with the first ebullition of Crisp's peculiar humour. "Can't you see we're not alone? Wait till we get outside."

Not another word did Crisp utter; and the station-master porters, and telegraph clerks—speculators to a man—together with a tall angular individual who looked like a bagman, and who spoke with a brogue, had to take their several ways, unenlightened as to the cause of Crisp's whistle of surprise. The brief warning of Mr. Heston they had *not* heard.

"Here, let me give you a leg up," said Heston, when they got outside the station.

"No, not on this—I——"

"Jump up! and *do* keep that silly tongue of yours between your teeth, WILL YER? Never mind me, I can manage. This, is the road to He'thorp, isn't it?"

Crisp nodded assent. Speechless as "the dumb old servitor" who steered the lily maid Elaine to the court of King Arthur was he now: speechless and likewise grumpy.

"Come on then; we can talk by-and-by."

Crisp again nodded, and the pair trotted gently off, inspected by station-master, porters, telegraph-clerk, and bagman-looking stranger, the latter of whom, in his obvious thirst for equine knowledge, had allowed the omnibus to depart without him. They rode on without exchanging a word, or altering the pace, until they reached the top of the hill beyond the bridge that crosses the Wimple, where Mr. Heston pulled up.

"Now Crisp," said he, encouragingly "you can speak."

"I ha' nowt to say," responded Matthew, surlily.

"Come, come," retorted Heston, "you musn't begin to show temper! that's a fool's game. A precious fine customer you are, to begin gibbing now. Have they squared you?"

"Squared me!" he exclaimed, with a look of sovereign contempt. "Let em' try it on!"

"Ha, ha!" laughed Heston, "it looks like it."

"Never mind," rejoined Crisp, sulkily.

"But I do mind. We must row in together. First of all, tell me if you know what horse you're across?"

"No; but I can tell you what horse I'm not across."

"You can; and that is——"

"Kelpie."

"No!" exclaimed Heston, his ruddy face broadening with a grin of mischievous import, "and what else have you discovered Mr. Crisp? Now, be careful," he added, adopting the manner of a cross-examining Q.C., "be careful sir, if you are not on your oath!"

"Why, I've fand out this, Mr. Heston—where you got him or how he is bred I dinnot know—but the nag I have hod on noo is as like Kelpie as ivir he can be! Two cherries fra 't same branch couldn't be mair alike. I don't think there's another man i' this country, barrin Mr. Arthur and me—and happen yoursel', for ye've studied them together, could tell 't difference."

"That will do, witness," rejoined Heston in the forensic manner, and gleefully withal, "you may stand down.—Mat, my lad, if you think the nag you are on so much like Kelpie here, they'd never tumble to the difference up yonder, eh?" and he pointed in the direction of the town of Heatherthorp.

"Never, but——"

"Stop a bit. From what I've heard about Blouzelinda, I think Kelpie is just about good enough to do her at the weights. But that is not everything. We must have a bit of money out of them."

"That's it!"

"And I fancy I see my way to getting it. You saw that three-cornered Irishman—him with nose and whiskers to match, at the railway station?"

Crisp nodded.

"That's a confederate of Mr. Ryan's; he's got some money to lay against Kelpie. We rode here together. He told me he was in the Irish linen line, and asked me if I knew a Mither Essom who lived in Heatherthorp. Crisp hasn't added another branch to his trade, eh?"

"No."

"This schaming broth of a bhoy must be looked afther," proceeded Heston, mimicking the brogue of the designing stranger. "Depend upon it he's Ryan's commissioner. We must have *him* on the bounce. And now look here. The doctor has given me full permission to work this little business as *I* like. You go on home with Devilskin, and put him up just as you would Kelpie—don't make a face about it; d'ye think I'd leave Kelpie a minute! and *we'll* stop at the Stork and Castle, where I am known. You see what I mean?"

Crisp nodded an uncheerful assent. The idea of parting with Kelpie troubled him sorely.

"We'll have it got up for them to-morrow—my Irish friend will stop at the Stork and Castle: I recommended him to do so. I shall tell him that there's to be a sort of trial in the morning. Now, listen. I shall turn out with Kelpie, who will be *in my clothing*; you with Devilskin"—Crisp's face lengthened.

at this—"and I should not wonder if Devilskin was beaten by twenty lengths. If that does not set 'em a task, we must break Devilskin—I mean Kelpie—down, the morning before the race; we can manage that easily enough beforehand, with a white handkerchief spotted with red ink—or a cut finger which is better. Now we understand each other."

Crisp could not speak, his heart was too full. He gripped the hand of his fellow-conspirator—he looked him full in the face—he winked. It was a powerful contraction of the dexter eyelids, and it spoke libraries. They rode on in silent amity. At last they understood each other.

They were not the only plotters who that night compared notes about the match. Outside the borough boundaries, by the side of the river Wimple, two figures might have been seen deeply engaged in conversation. We have long known one of these; we have met the other to-night for the first time. Listen.

"And so you think, Mr. Macarthy, that it is a moral for the mare?"

"Indade I do, Misther Essom—that is my friend Royan thinks so, and shouldn't he know?"

"Just so; just so. Then we must get his money on somehow; but I am afraid we shall have to lay stiffish odds. However, you will not show at the Sursingle to-night, I suppose? I fancy, on the whole, you'd better not. I will go and see what's moving. Look in in the morning and give me the office about the rough up."

"And would I fail ye, Misther Essom?"

They returned to Heatherthorp immediately afterwards, Mr. Macarthy to his quarters at the Stork and Castle, to be

crammed like a Christmas Turkey by Machiavellian Mr. Heston, and Mr. Daniel Essom to Martin Sillery's—by the back way—increasedly anxious to lay a fair price against Kelpie.

It was well for Matthew Crisp and John Golightly, likewise plotting on the bank side without the boundaries of the borough, that the hairdresser and his coadjutor did not run against them; well for both couples of conspirators, for a meeting would have been awkward.

“See Leeson, and Dale, and Emsden King, and tell 'em how the land lies. They will be able to get the money on quiet enough next Wednesday, just six days fra' this, and the day afore the meeting begins. There'll be heaps of Shipley folk here up at Market day.”

“All reet, Mat.”

“And they're not to mind what they hear about Kelpie being beaten in his trial; or aboot his breaking down. He's mebbly dee baith afore 't day. When there is a screw loose I'll let 'em know quick enough.”

“All reet, Mat.”

“Noo, haud thee ways to Sillery's, and shut Essom at yance if he offers mair than two to one.”

“All right.”

“Keep thy eye—baith eyes—on an Irish feller who'll mebbly be wi' Essom.”

“I will.”

Still plotting, but of another description. Timothy Wilson, Esq., who had retired to the library to read (his custom after a strictly family dinner), leaving the girls to amuse themselves as best they might, was sound asleep; a condition which betrayed a contented mind, and a singular capacity for speedily

mastering Professor Carbonifero's celebrated paper on the adulteration of bone-manures. The girls were about as keenly wakeful as two young ladies with a relish for mischief, and a taste for correct intrigue, could possibly be. Their chosen retreat was Kate's little room, where there was a bright fire, and not the least prospect of an intruder more formidable than Burroughs. The lamp was out (what was the use of lighting it to talk? Sylvia said), and Kate and her friend sat upon the hearth-rug, and cosily took the bright fire into their confidences.

"So, they are both coming, you see, Syl," observed Kate, musingly, "and to speak vulgarly, my dear—there'll be a row."

"Why? This is not a duelling age—certainly not a duelling land. Gentlemen don't riddle each other with bullets in their host's drawing-room; and you surely *don't* expect your Doctor to pull off his coat, and invite Mr. Woodridge—I rather pity that young gentleman—to remove his, do you?"

"How can you be so foolish, Sylvia? I did not mean that, I meant——"

"To say that if Mr. Woodridge loses *this* match, or *vice versa*, he and Doctor Sutton will, with malice prepense, enter into a pleasant little discussion over your father's hospitable board, immediately the ladies retire. What do you take your *affiancé* for? An idiot? Isn't it his policy to conciliate your dear, perverse papa?"

"I suppose you are right, Sylvia; you generally are—indoors; but I wish it were over."

"Wish away, my love; it's sure to be eventful, and you must be ready for any emergency; for if I interpret our delightful Doctor aright, he is becoming desperate. Nothing would surprise me less than to see him attempt to take the castle—I mean your papa and yourself—by storm."

"Sylvia!"

"You need not make such big eyes over it; I am serious. *Our* arrangements are as perfect as we can make them, thank goodness! If I mistake not we have not undertaken more than we can accomplish (keep within your resources in party-giving is a maxim worthy of Tupper), so do not lose heart. We honour Sir Harry Sursingle with our presence on the Thursday; he honours The Place with his august presence on the Friday, to take part in a heavy dinner, a carpet dance, a charade,—no, to patronize a charade; he comes, and his party come with him."

"Although I am the hostess, Sylvia, darling, what should I have done without you?"

"Done?—nothing. You are in love. Hope deferred, and so forth. You will be a cypher in this ancestral hall (by the way, it is not very ancestral, is it?) on Friday next, perhaps worse than a cypher. But shall I desert you in your hour of trial? Never!"

The interview ended, as their interviews generally did, with Kate's kissing her eccentric friend, and telling her she was "a strange girl."

Rather late that same night the Doctor and his man, Mat, compared notes.

"Pray don't enter into a long rigmarole about what Heston means to do. He has my full permission to do what he likes, and so you and he must pull together. I just wanted to tell you not to forget to back Kelpie whenever you have a chance of getting on at a decent price. And if any of my friends ask how I am, say you fancy I am not as well as I should be. Say I am awfully thin; which is quite true, Mat, for I have been training a bit. And I shan't be offended if you

shake your head and wish I was a trifle stronger. Do you understand?"

"Do I not!" Mat exclaimed, significantly.

"Wonderful what sense Mr. Arthur has—when he likes," added Crisp, meditatively, as the Doctor turned his back. "He's bent on winning this time—evidently. Poor owd Kelpie! I wonder how he gets on at the Stork and Castle? I'd rather he'd been in his own snug stall." Crisp heaved a sigh. "I mun put up wi't, I suppose; Imun put up wi' it. Noo let's see and mak' his twin brother comfortable for the night. Astonishing how like Kelpie he is. Couldn't ha' believed it. Come ower, owd Devilskin! Surprisin' likeness. Poor owd Kelp! I wonder if Heston understands his little ways."

Mr. Macarthy's interior was thoroughly whiskey-proof. Although he had kept it up with Mr. Heston until far beyond the hour of retiring observed by the habitual inmates of the Stork and Castle, he rose before the boots and sallied forth, just as Heston, mounted on Kelpie, was disappearing round the corner of a bye-street that afforded a short cut to the road which leads to the race-course. There was not a soul astir at that end of the town, and as he could not distinguish what was going on at the other, he was unaware of the advent of Crisp on Devilskin—likewise *en route* to the course. The "three-cornered Irishman," as Heston had somewhat irreverently termed him, made his way, as if by instinct, to the best place for witnessing the spin, but to his embarrassment, when he had taken up a snug but commanding position there, he found he was not alone. The fact was, John Golightly, although he knew what the result of the trial would be, had been unable to resist the temptation of seeing how the Doctor's horse took his fences."

"Good mornin', sir," said Jack, aloud—and, to himself, "this is the Irishman Crisp said I was to look after—yes, it's him for a hundred!"

"Good mornin'," replied Mr. Macarthy.

"We're baith on t' saame arrand," proceeded Jack, "they're goin' to try 'em."

And he pointed cabalistically to the two nags, by this time cantering up to the start.

"D'ye moind the weights?" asked Macarthy.

"I dinnot. But if Kelpie's beaten—keep down, or they'll see you—I hedge iviry penny of my money. They're off!"

Spare the chronicler, in prospect of the greater event so near at hand, the task of following the pair stride by stride through their humbugging rough-up. Devilskin was beaten many a length; in fact he could not act at all during the last half mile; and Golightly, audibly cursing his luck, left the Irishman to make the best he could of the trial. Essom was waiting for him, and "the tip" he brought would have been altogether reassuring but for one thing. Mr. Macarthy was not the only witness of Kelpie's ignominious defeat; Golightly had seen it—the whole town would know before noon.

"We shall have to lay three to one on Blouzelinda. I don't like doing it. I'd sooner take it. Only, as you say, it is such a certainty."

That night at the Sursingle, Emsden King partook, or seemed to partake, abundantly of champagne; yet only to the uninitiated did he appear very deep in his cups. His friends knew better. They were acquainted with his powers of absorption. However, in the exuberance of the moment he offered to back his friend Doctor Sutton for "anything in reason."

"One of th' besht cricketersh in t' Northridin', bar none!"

What do I care about this—this trial? Here, will anybody—is there anybody game enough t—t—to lay me four to one 'gainst Doctor Sutton's horse! I'll take three to one. What! will none of you lay?"

"Yes, I will!" suddenly exclaimed Mr. Macarthy, who happened to be present. He would have shot Mr. King before, but he feared a bet made with the enthusiastic yeoman at that moment might afterwards have to be cancelled. Essom whisperingly told him it would be all right, and therefore he spoke. "You can have three ponies."

"Done."

"Three fifties?"

"Done again, sir. One hundredanifty golden sovereigns to fifty ditto—Doctor Suttonsh horse Kelpie," muttered Mr. King, as he slowly entered the wager. "And your name ish——"

"Macarthy, sorr,—Michael Macarthy. Misther Essom here knows me—or shall we post the money?"

"Cert'nly not. Your name is sufficient, if Mr. Essom says, it's all right." Essom nodded, and the bet was ratified.

The succeeding day some more of the Doctor's, that is to say, the stable's money was invested, chiefly in driblets, partly by Crisp, and partly by Leeson, the victim being Mr. Macarthy's commissioner, Essom, whose book, had the "laying" portion of it been his, would have occasioned him no little uncasiness. Then Essom must have a bit on of his own (he meditated), they said it was such a good thing; why, they told him that even if Kelpie were all right, Blouzelinda could fall down and win! But he could hardly make up his mind to lay such odds, and it was likely to be worse on the day when the Shipley puddlers and blast-furnace men backed the mare; as back her they certainly would, if they had to lay

as much as twenty to one. It was a new game for him, this laying three to one on anything ; and he did not half like it, although the money was not his. Yet Essom considered this the very best thing he ever knew in his life.

The trainer's *ruse* had worked admirably, and he rubbed hands over its success with Crisp. There would be no occasion to "break Kelpie down ;" for the odds they were laying on Blouzelinda were quite as big as Crisp and Heston desired, under the circumstances.

Another trial of Kelpie—if a prudent bit of schooling over the country he was to travel in the match might be termed a trial—came off in the dusk four days prior to the eventful day ; but there were no extraneous witnesses present. Thanks to Crisp's ostentatious exhibition of Kelpie (that is to say, of Kelpie's remarkable "double " Devilskin) in and about Heatherthorp, the real Simon Pure was graciously vouchsafed an undisturbed amble to the course, steered by Heston, and accompanied by an accomplished cross-country nag, his property, under the guidance of a dried-up artichoked pupil, whose conspicuous virtues were an indisposition to augment in bulk, and a capacity for keeping his tongue between his teeth at the call of duty.

Doctor Sutton was waiting, and as he meant business, no time was lost in stripping the pair of their clothing, and getting them ready for their rough-up. Kelpie behaved like a gentleman, took his fences in great style, and collared the last quarter of a mile, which was on the rise, in a fashion that spoke eloquently for the careful preparation of Crisp and Heston—collared it three lengths in front of his adversary.

"We shan't break down for want of condition, Heston?"

"Nor for want of being properly handled either, Doctor,"

rejoined the trainer, admiringly. "Bar accidents, sir, we shall win."

"If we don't, we must try and stretch the other one's neck at all events."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the articked pupil, touching the place where his intellectual faculties were supposed to reside. "I suppose it's good enough for my couple?"

"My lad, keep your money in your pocket," replied the Doctor. "If you were to invest your couple, as you call it, the Blouzelinda party might suspect something. You stand a tenner with me."

"Thank you, sir, replied the delighted mannikin, more determined than before to invest his couple.

Messrs. Tagrag and Bobtail, in the shape of a ragged regiment of unwholesome vendors of correct cards, swarmed into Heatherthorp on the following market day, and an industrious band of north-country disciples of St. Nicholas followed in their train. These were veterans; by coming on the Wednesday, they were enabled, as some of the butterwives found to their cost, to get their hands in," by way of preparing the way for the more audacious investigations of the morrow. Essom lathered not, neither did he shave on that day! his earlier hours were occupied with visits to the Sursingle and the Stork and Castle to look after the arrivals; then, later on, came solemn interviews with the printer; and, later still, we shall find him in the committee room, awaiting the entries for the overnight stakes. "There's lots of horses," with an air of grave satisfaction, said one sporting haunter of the Sursingle to another, "and that last un's a clinker." Essom was making his way to the committee when this remark was made. He said nothing, but immediately repaired to the Sursingle stables

to have a look at the aforesaid clinker. It was Blouzelinda, who had just arrived from Shipley.

"Has Mr. Woodridge come by this train?" asked Essom, meaningly, of the groom, who was making the chestnut comfortable for the night.

"No, he hasn't," replied the man, not very sweetly; "but I can tell him first thing in the morning that ye were asking for him—I should say, I would tell him if I knew your name."

"My name's Essom."

"Come in! Now, what *do* you want here?" ironically inquired the groom, as sundry loungers crowded round the stable door. "Can't you see the mare's not used to be gaped at? Get out!" He banged the door, and turned the key. "If your name's Essom, it makes all the difference in the world. Get over, Blouzy, old girl! Now will she do?"

Blouzelinda was a showy mare. Taking in colour (a rich golden chestnut), she was particularly attractive from the park-hack point of view, albeit her size—she stood exactly sixteen hands one—was rather against her. Her head, neck and shoulders were little short of perfection; she was fairly ribbed-up, had a capital barrel, and large, handsomely-turned quarters, set off by a gaily-borne flag. Her thighs were light, and hocks small, both these and her knees being a trifle further from the ground than a hypereritic would care to see. Perhaps her weakest point, however, notwithstanding her fine barrel, was want of girth; in fact, she was big behind the saddle, instead of before and beneath it.

"Do! I should think she will!" replied Essom, enthusiastically. "Why, if she had not the best of the weights, and"—he added in a lower tone—"they tell me she has, she is big enough to

pull right over the Doctor's pony; and almost long enough in the leg to take the obstacles in her stride!"

The match was set for the opening day, and was the first event on the card. A lovely autumn morning brought a motley crowd of district excursionists to the town—already thronged with visitors from remote neighbourhoods. As the chronicler is not writing this with a view to enlightening the dark minds of, say the natives of Japan, he will be forgiven the task of describing a scene that may be witnessed anywhere within these dominions, on almost any working day during the colder months of the twelve.

"This is a capital place, Kate," said Sylvia to our darling; "it seems to me that we can see everywhere."

The convertible brougham was open, and the two young ladies, half-buried in a cosy mass of bright-coloured rugs and some of the choicest furs of the Hudson's Bay Company, might well be congratulated on the position they had selected. By coming early they had, under favour, secured a place nearly opposite the judge's box. Mr. Wilson was unavoidably absent, enjoying the society of his aristocratic friend, the gout.

"Yes, I thought of that when I sent to Mr. Essom. There's that dreadful bell; now they're going to clear the course. Oh, Syl, if *he* should be beaten! Do you see Arthur anywhere? There he is! Don't you see? he lifts his hat. Poor fellow! I think he is pale, don't you, Sylvia?—There, there's Woodridge, turning away from Sir Harry's carriage. Oh! you horrid young man," she said to herself, fervently, the while acknowledging Woodridge's salute with much manifest sweetness; "it is very wrong to have such wishes, I know, but I should like you to hurt yourself, just a little, so that you were to get beaten in consequence!"

"Katherine Wilson! why, you grow positively diabolical."

"I don't care. See, see! There's Kelpie, glorious fellow, walking as sedately as though he knew all about it (I half believe he does), and Crisp leading him. And here comes the other. What a peacock!"

"Upon my word, Kate, it is a very beautiful animal; why your Kelpie looks quite mean beside it."

"Sylvia, allow me to know something about a horse, please," said Kate, severely. Miss Vandervelde shrugged her shoulders in silence. Now they are putting the numbers up—and there's the starter—and, that noise in the ring is the betting men, Sylvia, you know, and, oh dear, here they come!"

They were both accomplished horsemen, you might gather that at a glance, and there was no fault with the appearance of either; perhaps, however, the *toilette* of the Doctor was a trifle more workmanlike than that of his adversary.

"How handsome he looks in our colours!" whispered Kate.

"How handsome they both look, for that matter," replied Sylvia. "Woodridge's colours are remarkably pretty."

"I would not be absurd, if I were you, Syl," replied Kate. "White with green braid and orange cap! Why he might be a buttercup."

"I don't care, Kate the Crusty! he looks charming."

"Oh, those horrid men," peevishly exclaimed Kate, apostrophising the dulcet-tongued who were offering mellifluously to take four to one. "Now they are cantering—however you can admire that long-legged creature (I wish her legs were not so long though) I don't know—how charmingly Kelpie moves! Sylvia, give me the glass; they will be off directly."

Crisp waited until the pair had finished their canter, and then, mounting the mare, crossed to the far side of the course, where

a thick crowd of the many-headed indicated the margin of the water jump. Crisp was as sober as a conscientious member of the United Kingdom Alliance. His present mission was to ascertain if the take-off of "the brook" was, in accordance with a pledge had and obtained from Essom, cured of its rottenness.

"Just as I thowt," he said to himself with an oath when he saw the state of affairs. "Now, if Mr. Arthur takes my advice and lets the other mak' running, I can give him the office. There, they're off."

The flag fell, and the two sailed along together for the space of "a distance," when the Doctor took a pull at Kelpie, and Blouzelinda went away with a strongish lead. Kate's excitement increased. The ring roared less loudly than heretofore,—as yet, the race afforded little encouragement for "betting in running."

"I hope Arthur won't let him get too far away," said Kate, nervously; "and now Crisp rides up to him,—what can it mean?"

After landing over a fence a field removed from the water-jump, the Doctor, still clear of Blouzelinda, in the rear *was* joined by Crisp on Widow Malone—as Kate had wonderingly descried.

"That's right, Mr. Arthur," said Crisp, pounding along by his side, but fairly out of the track. "Let him cut it out. You're safe to do him. Only keep on the whip hand in the take-off; t'other parts as rotten as touchwood."

Crisp pulled up, and the Doctor continued on his careful career, mindful of Mat's warning. The superior stride and bigger jumping power of Blouzelinda served her in good stead at the water; she took off from a sound bit of turf and landed safely. Not so Kelpie! Just as the Doctor was following, an

over-eager spectator leant too far forward, and "put his foot in it," the exploit eliciting a shout of derision from his companions.

"For the first time in his cross-country career Kelpie swerved, and—refused.

"Oh, Sylvia!" ejaculated Kate, her face whitening, and the tears starting into her eyes in the extremity of her excitement.

"Kelpie has refused!"

"Refused what?"

The poor girl could not reply. The *contretemps* was seen from the stand, and the dulcet-voiced broke out into a simultaneous roar.

"Ten to one on Blouzelinda!" shouted Mr. Macarthy.

"Put it down to me—a hundred to ten," shouted, in response, Emsden King. "They don't win there."

The bet was booked.

"Oh, Sylvia! that horrid Woodridge is going to win."

Quicker than it takes to hint it, the Doctor put Kelpie at the water, and in brief space was following, with set teeth and grim resolution, in pursuit of his rival—who looked round and smiled. He forgot the old proverb.

"Woodridge wins—by Jove!" exclaimed the mildly excited baronet. "Here's fifty to ten on Blouzelinda!"

"Put that down to me, Sir Harry," cried Heston, who had not taken his eyes off the combatants.

Sir Harry put it down.

There was a bit of plough to cross ere reaching the dip before the turn for home—about a quarter of a mile off—and there Kelpie made up some of the difference.

"I think—I hope—Arthur—oh, Sylvia, if Kelpie should win after all! Now they're out of sight—now they reappear, and Kelpie is only a length behind. Splendid fellow! how he

charges the hill—and he *can* charge a hill, I know!—he is catching Reginald—now they’re together.”

With rare patience, the Doctor—never forgetting for a moment that he was carrying the heavier weight—waited, for he knew the ascent to the distance would tell its tale. It did. Blouzelinda’s heart was not big enough to pull her through the struggle, notwithstanding all the advantages of superior stride, lighter impost, and the lead, when that meant almost everything. Woodridge felt the least flustered and anxious—the Doctor was catching him up at every stride; while Sutton himself, bravely seconded by Kelpie, who, with his ears pricked, lay down like a lion to his work, rode with unflinching determination. Woodridge did all he knew; he fought the battle inch by inch, but it was of no avail. When the level ground was reached they were girth and girth; two hundred yards from home the mare “came again,”—too late!—one dig of the spur, one cut of the whip, one encouraging steadier, and Kelpie won the match—as the local papers afterwards said, “after a most magnificent finish, by a neck.”

CHAPTER XII.

CLOSES ACCOUNTS WITH THE HEATHERTHORP RACE-COMMITTEE, AND SHOWS BY A FAITHFUL REPRODUCTION OF SOME OF THE FEATURES—CONVERSATIONAL, SALUTATORY, AND GENTEELLY DRAMATIC—OF THE PARTY TIMOTHY WILSON, ESQ., GAVE TO DELIGHT HIS DAUGHTER AND GRATIFY MISS SYLVIA VANDERVELDE, THAT THERE ARE TIMES WHEN A STORM IS FOLLOWED BY ANYTHING BUT A CALM.

REGINALD WOODRIDGE satisfied his rival’s claims with almost obtrusive punctuality, immediately after the weighing-in, venturing at the same time to “hope Dr. Sutton

would find *that* all right." Dr. Sutton, not to be outdone in that sort of hauteur, coolly, and with painful deliberation, counted the notes Woodridge tendered him, and said, "Yes, they are quite correct; now, Mr. Woodridge, we are quits."

It is questionable whether Woodridge regarded the transaction in that light; however, he said nothing, the slight but significant stress laid by the Doctor on the word "now" failing to provoke a retort.

The blow which Essom received over the match was, to use a euphemism current amongst the genii of the Ring, "a nose-ender." His face, as he pored over his book, was one that might with advantage to the canvas have been faithfully transferred to Mr. Frith's picture of the Derby Day. Michael Macarthy swore: but since he took the oath in unadulterated Irish, his objurgations were "nothing to nobody" in the Heatherthorp Ring. To do him simple justice he had no thought of adopting the perhaps politic, but somewhat reprehensible tactics of those fine sportsmen who obtain a precarious livelihood by welshing. It was well for Mr. Macarthy that he happened to be wholesomely upright in his betting transactions. The lads from the dales, not to mention the lamb-like operatives from the town of Shipley-on-Wimple, rather object to welshing. Fleet of foot, and in that extremity webbed withal, must be the nefarious one who loses at the meeting, and parts not, an' he seeks to escape the righteous wrath of Shipley and Heatherthorp combined!

But let us be just. Michael Macarthy ("To him" most significantly Emsden King immediately after the race) met all his creditors' claims like a man. On the other hand, Sir Harry Nursingle disdained to recollect his wager with Heston—or, at any rate his recollection failed to end in the satisfaction of the

trainer's demand. It is true that the baronet—haw—made an airy reference—haw—to a cheque, you know—haw—the book containing which, he—haw, had not with him; and that was all.

Heston said, "Never mind, Sir Harry, it's not the least consequence; any time will do." Considering that he had been very hard hit during the season, the exact opposite was the fact; any time would *not* do. But Heston could not afford to offend the Baronet.

"He'd have looked awfully glum if I had asked him for a little time to pay in, I'll bet. He is such a desperately long-winded customer, too; shan't see the colour of his coin for months. I would not ha' cared if he hadn't had a race for his money, but he had! and such a race!" Heston grumbled to himself in such fashion the while he walked by the side of Kelpie, as the equine hero of the hour, mounted by Crisp, and attended by the dried-up articed pupil, left the inclosure. Crisp was in such an ineffable state of beatification he had neither a word nor a look to bestow on anybody; and the articed pupil walked taller by three inches, at the very least, than he had been wont to do, as he reflected on his good fortune. Kelpie had won him a pony!

There was nothing to detain the Doctor on the course after he had won the match, so he turned his face towards the town long ere the card of the day was exhausted. As he allowed Widow Malone to bear him at her own lazy will along the almost deserted road, he fell a thinking, or rather a dreaming, and the tide of his thoughts set strongly towards that unexplored ocean—the future.

The months were speeding, and Kate was yet unwon. His she was, heart and soul, of that he was sure; but old Wilson

remained as resolute as ever. What did the old donkey—(that he should, in thought even, so stigmatise the father of his darling!)—what did the old donkey want? “It is questionable, in these levelling-up days, whether there is anything in it,” mused Doctor Sutton; “but if there be, my family is better than his; and I can keep a wife as she ought to be kept—God bless her! But all fathers are alike. I suppose I shall be precisely as unreasonable when I arrive at his years if I then chance to possess such a perilous treasure as a lovely marriageable daughter. It is selfishness—intolerable selfishness! She must either mate as he has willed, or stop at home till she grows old and weazened, and takes to cultivating ferns, or kittens, or curates, or such-like harmless things—varying her amusements by an occasional spell at dutiful nursing, when her crabbed papa happens to have the gout! Well, courage, Arthur, my boy! one more endeavour! Perhaps to-morrow evening, he may——”

“For a hero, Doctor Sutton, you are about the most commonplace, matter-of-fact person it has been my fortune to meet. Not that heroes have fallen much in my way, though.”

The speaker was Miss Sylvia Vandervelde. Neither to her nor Kate—certainly not to Kate—when the match was won, had the races afforded any pleasure, and so Miss Wilson, easily obtaining Sylvia’s acquiescence thereto, at once gave the coachman the route. Our hero was so deeply absorbed, he had taken no note of the approaching earriage as it gradually overtook him, and now pulled up in the grassiest, and therefore the most silent portion of the nearly empty road. Kate had no words of welcome for her Arthur; but if he did not feel that her eyes were saying more to him than ever mortal tongue could have uttered, and saying it in sweeter fashion too, he was duller of apprehension than we think.

“An uncommonly matter-of-fact hero, and an ungracious into the bargain, which is worse,” continued Sylvia, in her tone of raillery; “isn’t he, Kate? I suppose you flatter yourself, Dr. Sutton, it was through your superior skill you gained the victory. Now, my opinion is that it was nothing of the kind. You need not shake your head—it was nothing of the kind. You were successful because you wore the colours *we* sent you, sir, and for no other reason; and you lack the grace to come and say so!”

“Pray, don’t be quite so hard upon me, Miss Vandervelde,” replied the Doctor, smiling at her badinage; and you must not ridicule me without mercy, if I tell you that I purposely avoided your carriage, because—because—”

“Well, sir.”

“Because I feared you might fancy I wanted to be praised.”

“And so you did—and you want it now; but no, Kate may please herself; I am dumb!” and Miss Vandervelde screwed up her pretty little mouth in physical confirmation of her resolve.

“You know Sylvia well by this, Arth—I mean Doctor Sutton,” began Kate, blushing prettily as she glanced at their statuesque Jehu, “and won’t mind what she says, I am sure. I declare she was just as delighted with your victory as I was.” Kate blushed again, while Sylvia’s piquant face fully expressed the vehement negative her vow prevented her from expressing.

“I think I do know Miss Vandervelde, Kate,” said the Doctor, bravely oblivious of the presence of the statuesque handler of the ribands, “and I would not be without the knowledge for worlds. *We* know her, Kate.”

“It was a hard race, and you had nearly lost it once?” queried Kate, as much to give the conversation a fresh turn as not.

"Once, yes; but Kelpie's heart is big, you know."

"And the rider of Kelpie"—began she; the sentence remained incomplete; she felt she was treading on delicate ground.

"Could not possibly give in while there was a chance of winning, remembering—and that he never forgot—whose eyes were looking on."

Only Sylvia heard the latter portion of this speech, spoken as it was in a subdued tone. Their statuesque Jehu did *not* hear it.

"Mind you, Woodridge rides exceedingly well," continued he Doctor; he would have said more, but a start and a grunt from the statuesque coachman—statuesque no longer—and a sudden ejaculation from the pursed-up lips of Miss Vandervelde, caused him to come to a full stop. The Jehu had backed Woodridge, and it was balm to his wounded spirit to think that his judgment had been so sound. He had had a race for his money, and he had not been done for want of jockeyship. Which was Yorkshire comfort out and out. Wait till he saw Crisp! As for Miss Vandervelde, she shall speak for herself.

"There now! I must break my vow, Doctor Sutton, if only to confound this monstrously unfair young lady, who prides herself a little too much on her knowledge of horsemanship, I beg to say. I don't know whether you are fishing for compliments, or not, sir, and I don't care. I said Reginald Woodridge rode well; *she* said he must have got his horsemanship in the mounted police. Did you ever hear of such injustice? Kate Wilson, what have you to say for yourself now?"

Kate Wilson had nothing to say for herself at that moment. She stole a glance, half shy, half sly, and wholly enchanting,

at Sutton, who—lying in wait for it—replied. They understood each other. Miss Vandervelde was allowed to enjoy her triumph in silence.

Bidden to the banquet at Sir Harry Sursingle's, along with the rest of the notables of both sexes who had assisted at Mr. Essom's "first day," Dr. Sutton, after a grave consultation with himself, decided not to go. His reasons for stopping away, albeit they satisfied himself, were not calculated to meet the objections of sagacious Miss Vandervelde; indeed, for that matter, he was not prepared to mention them to a living soul, and when she said—

"I suppose we shall have the pleasure of seeing you this evening at the Manor?" he felt at a loss for a reply.

"Well—that is—I hardly know, until I see Robson. I rather think there is a patient I must myself attend to this evening; one that will prevent my doing honour to Sir Harry's hospitality."

"Not coming, Arthur?" began Miss Wilson, in tones and with a look of dismay; "then I'm sure I don't care to—"

"Pray don't talk like a silly school girl, Katherine Wilson! You must pardon me, Doctor, but she sometimes needs the rating of a taskmistress like myself. Not go to the Manor! Who ever heard of such a thing? Most certainly you must go: it is expected of you. Besides, how can you look for them to come to you if you frivolously refuse to go to them? You are sure to be at The Place to-morrow evening, Doctor?" queried Sylvia, insinuatingly.

"I!—yes!—surely! Why, you don't imagine——"

"Not I indeed. I will wager you a dozen pairs of gloves though (the races are not yet over, remember) that neither Mr. Robson, nor ever such an important case, would keep you——"

“ Miss Vandervelde !——”

“ Sylvia, it is high time we were getting home,” exclaimed Kate, with more than adequate earnestness.

“ So it is,” replied Miss Vandervelde, looking the mischievous things she uttered not. “ Jobson—home ! ”

The *au revoirs* were laughingly exchanged, and, in another second, Doctor Sutton found himself once more alone with his own thoughts and Widow Malone ; speculating now, as Mr. Wilson had done before him, on the eccentricity of Miss Vandervelde.

“ Keen girl, that ! ” said he to himself, as he resumed his leisurely amble towards Heatherthorp. “ I should uncommonly like to tell her ; but it would be premature to do so, perhaps. For the present I shall keep my own counsel.”

The party at the Manor passed off as such parties in the country, whereat inexorable dyspepsia waits on appetite, invariably do. Sir Harry played the host—haw—angularly, and well ; and Sir Harry’s principal guest, the new member for the Riding—haw—played his part (“ dressed,” as it was, with wondrous care) with an enchanting inanity delightful to behold. Several regulation specimens of animated dining-room furniture supported the baronet’s mahogany, over which, conversation that took the regulation tone, mingled with libations of the regulation wine, flowed in regulation fashion, and produced the regulation results. Over the mahogany, too, where the Government was severely handled, the affairs of the Riding completely settled, the new whip righteously criticised, the match run over again, and the last scandal pharisaically canvassed, Woodridge comported himself like the lion he was not. In fact, he was the soul of the party. Failure had done for him what it seldom does for commonplace men, mellowed his

asperities; and this gracious change was especially visible when he rejoined the ladies, and, unabashed by the recollection of their last interview, entered into a good-humoured combat of wits with Miss Vandervelde. Sylvia was amazed, and as soon as she got the opportunity, which was not until, sleepy and fatigued, she and Kate were consigned to the care of Jobson, she put her amazement into words.

“Supposing it *was* the wine, my dear, what of that? It could only serve to oil his speech for him. I will never believe that Sir Harry Sursingle’s old port, rare and curious though it be, could so alter a man’s nature. Depend upon it, Reginald Woodridge is all the better for the snubbing he has received.”

“I am glad to hear it, Sylvia; especially as a change was so much required,” replied Kate, with a yawn.

“Kate, you are not a generous enemy, and it is not nice of you. But, never mind.”

With this sagely suggestive remark, Miss Vandervelde suffered the conversation to drop, an example we may follow with regard to the party at Sir Harry’s, since a further reference to that event is not required by the exigencies of this history.

Doctor Sutton had hardly breakfasted on the morning after the match, when he was informed that Crisp wanted a word with him.

“Ha! Crisp, is that you? Nothing wrong, I hope.”

“No, Mr. Arthur; nowt as I know of. Happen you are not gannin’ up at moor tee daay?”

“I have nothing to take me there, so I shall stop at home. But you can go, if you choose.”

“That’s what I wanted to see aboot, sir. And d’y’e think you could spare me to-night as well, Mr. Arthur?”

"Ye-es,—that is, yes; but where do you want to go to-night? Not out of the town, eh?"

"Oot o' t' town, no, sir; no, no! But Sillery's goin' to have a bit of a supper up at Sursingle, and some of us that's won wor money ower t' match, wants tee gan. I want to gan, sir."

"Oh, certainly; by all means. But, look here, Matthew, don't get *very* jolly. I might require you."

"All right, Mr. Arthur; thank you, sir."

Crisp departed, delighted with his leave of absence. He had scarcely turned his back ere the neat-handed Phillis of the establishment presented the Doctor with a note.

"Dorothy, from Mr. Barjona's, has just left it, sir; there's no answer."

"Very well. Now, what *can* have happened to bring Nathan Barjona's Dorothy here so early in the morning? What?—no!—This is too much. The presumptuous old humbug!"

The note which elicited these spasmodic comments ran as follows :—

"Halcyon-terrace, 10th mo. 4th.

"FRIEND ARTHUR BASINGHALL SUTTON,—I am some years thy senior, and, therefore, thou must own, better fitted than thyself to weigh in the balance of experience those follies which too frequently beset the dizzy path of youth. I trusted that the rumour as to thy being about to take part in the carnal festivities on the moor was untrue: but I hear thou and thy beast Kelpie,—thyself habited like a mountebank, in a silk jacket and cap—*did* help to entertain the fools and knaves assembled on the moor by a furious gallop, to the jeopardy of thy precious life, and that of thy faithful beast, for a sum of money. I need not tell thee thou art a fool for thy pains, for

thou knowest that already ; but I will say that, unless I receive thy pledge not to commit such folly again, thou ceasest to be doctor of mine. No horse-jockey shall have the care of my frail tenement of clay. In the event of thy not being prepared to afford me such a pledge, send in thy bill, and it shall be paid.

“ Thy friend, in deep concern,

“ NATHAN BARJONA.”

“ The insolent old thou-er and thee-er ! Promise him, forsooth ! It is improbable I have made my last appearance in the character—as he is pleased to put it—of a horse-jockey ; but no pledges, Nathan Barjona—at any rate, none to you. Now, for his answer.”

Brief as the time he spent in writing it, the Doctor's answer was couched in these terms :—

, ‘ October 5th.

“ SIR,—I have this moment read your note, and, in reply to the only portion of it that appears to require acknowledgment, beg to intimate that I will instruct Mr. Robson to forward your bill as soon as it can be prepared.

“ Yours, &c.,

“ A. B. SUTTON.

“ Nathan Barjona, Esq.”

“ Nonsense, Kate ! you frighten yourself with shadows. Suppose your dear, aggravating papa suffers from a few twinges of the gout, what then ? But, you know he is well enough to make his appearance as a host, even if he leave the more active duties of entertaining the guests to us. And then—the gout ! You forget what a bond of union that is between him and Sir Harry. The baronet's is an ancient county family, and I have observed that one of the things which ancient families

cultivate and preserve—just as they do the game—is the gout.”

“But, my dear Syl, if he should be cross with Arthur?”

“Then Arthur, as a sensible young man, must not be cross with him, that’s all.”

“Oh, I do wish the party were over!” exclaimed Kate; “I feel sure that something is going to happen.”

“Wish and ~~feel~~ as much as you please, Kate Wilson, only—don’t faint. I could bear anything but that. If you show the smallest symptom of going off, I abdicate on the instant. Remember!”

This conversation took place in Miss Wilson’s room, after the young ladies had put the finishing touches to their toilettes.

Sylvia had seen to everything—even to Mr. Wilson’s gout; that is to say she had informed herself of the fact of his being able to put his foot down without the remainder of his body undergoing intolerable sympathetic contortions, and she considered that was as much as she could expect. So long as he was able to show, she and Kate could accomplish the rest.

Nothing could have been better than the dinner, and all the guests behaved to admiration. The parson and his wife—consummate judges of such matters, as those who have had the luck to dine at the Parsonage know—could find no fault with the *cuisine*. Their three grown-up daughters, being very much grown-up, and quite beyond the pulpy stage of girlhood, similarly—if silently—appreciated Kate’s dinner. After testimony like this, no account need be taken of the curate, who, indeed, would not have been amongst the guests, if it had not been an understood thing that wherever the girls from the Parsonage went, he must go likewise in his capacity of clerical and unsalaried foot-page. Although the Rev. Richard Butter-

wick, Mrs. Butterwick and the three Miss Butterwicks were quite aware that the party at The Place had been arranged to supplement the races, they preferred, in view of meeting Sir Harry Sursinge, and the new member for the Riding, to shut their eyes to that un-Episcopalian circumstance. Indeed, if the truth must be told, the parson rather believed in our national sports, sir, which have a healthy influence, sir, when not carried to excess; and it was whispered (originally by Essom) that he had actually been seen in the ring at Doncaster no more than two St. Legers back. People will talk; Mrs. Butterwick affected not national sports, but she was known to all countryside as an artist in cribbage. As the curate, the Rev. Neville Reredos, lived in a ritualistic atmosphere of his own, outside which all was vague, he would no more have thought of inquiring the cause of the party at Wimpliedale Place than he would have dared to question Mrs. Butterwick's imperious right to hale him thither, as a foil to her three full-blown daughters. Besides the new member for the Riding, the Honorable Mr. Minim, Woodridge, and the Doctor, together with those guests we have named, there were a hard-riding captain of the —th, named Kay, who had brought his own nag and won the Welter, Miss Vandervelde's brother Albrecht—a blonde young man, with a lisp and an eyeglass—two of Mr. Wilson's friends from Shipley, Sir Harry's lawyer, and just a sufficient number of those persons who may be dismissed by the appellation "the other sex," to make up a pleasant quadrille, should that be needed.

"The fact is, Doctor, you ride better than I do."

Kate and Sylvia exchanged glances. It was Woodridge who spoke, and not sarcastically.

"You do yourself injustice," replied the Doctor, surprised at

his rival's sweetness ; "there is not an ounce between us. If you had come away from the water you would have won."

"Mr. Reredos, what does Doctor Sutton mean by an ounce between them, and coming away from the water?" inquired the gushingest Miss Butterwick, of the rapt curate.

"Really?—eh? I have no idea. Something in medicine, I have no doubt."

"A most delicious *entrée*, my dear; ask Miss Wilson for the recipe."

"I will," replied the faithful partner in palate and parochial duties of the Rev. Richard Butterwick.

"No, Wilson, they are too well educated already; depend upon that, sir."

"I agree with you, sir Harry," observed, in the parliamentary manner, the Honourable Mr. Minim. "How can you—haw—preserve the lines of demarcation between class and class—haw—unless you keep down what is called the education of the masses to—haw—a safe level."

"Well, I believe in education," remarked Mr. Wilson, with the emphasis of a man who felt what he said. "Give everybody a chance."

"But—haw—pardon me, sir," submitted the young senator, "What is to become of the land, if you give your labourers and labourers' wives education?"

"I should be disposed to ask the same question, Mr. Minim," said the parson. "The labouring classes are too apt to slight their pastors and masters, as it is. 'A little learning,' you know, sir."

And so the talk went on, Sylvia thereafter taking a prominent part in it. Practically *she* was the hostess. Her vivacity was precisely the element required to set off Kate's

modest—and, let it be confessed, somewhat lovelorn grace. Together and helping each other to shed over the board the daintier hospitalities of the house of Wilson, they were charming. Not the least remarkable feature in Miss Vandervelde's shower of sprightly words were those she was pleased to bestow on Woodridge. Even Kate, anxiously happy and nervously subdued as she was, sitting in the light of her lover's countenance, found herself wondering what it all meant. That Sylvia should throw her most captivating wiles around Woodridge, was, after what had happened, simply incomprehensible.

The heaviest dinner in the country must come to an end sometime, as this did. The ladies retired. Woodridge, the Doctor, and Captain Kay, of the —th, entered into an animated discussion as to the respective merits of cocktails and thoroughbreds across country ; then the education of the masses question was resumed, and the curate, no longer dismayed by the presence of Mrs. Butterwick and her lovely daughters, ventured to take Mr. Wilson's view of the subject, whereupon the Rev. Richard Butterwick ruthlessly sat upon him for his pains. Presently the ladies were rejoined, and later on—wonder upon wonders !—behold Kate standing up with Woodridge in a quadrille, and not disliking it either, for Reginald was really making himself most agreeable. The Doctor, meekly resigned to his fate, had for his *vis-à-vis* the plainest of the Miss Butterwicks. The select band of three, bidden from Shipley in case they might happen to be wanted, rattled through the old English airs of the quadrille right jollily ; the dancers had already hunted the hare, tripped it to a favourite tune of Charles the Second's, whistled o'er the lea with the curly-headed ploughboy, and commenced with the downfall of Paris, when Sylvia whispered to her partner, Captain Kay, of the —th—

"They can get on without us, Captain, so let me ask you to conduct me to a seat. There is Burroughs, Miss Wilson's maid, wishes to speak to me; and judging from the gravity of her countenance, she has something to say."

The gallant Captain performed his task to admiration. Sylvia approached Burroughs.

"Well, what is it?"

"Mr. Wilson, 'm, is very unwell in the libr'y. I don't like to speak to Miss Wilson—she might be alarmed."

"I will go with you."

When she returned the quadrille was at an end. Approaching Dr. Sutton, she said:

"Mr. Wilson requires medical aid; he is in the library. You are the only doctor here, so go."

His stay was more prolonged than hers had been, and when he returned, looking very grave indeed, he said:

"It is nothing serious. One of those slight things that admit of almost immediate relief. But that is not all I wanted to tell you. When I had made him comfortable for the night, I spoke to him on the old subject,—you know. I had made up my mind to speak this night, some time and somehow. I was a fool, Miss Vandervelde. He is as implacable as before—Kate is not for me!"

"Tut, tut, man! That is never the way to talk. If he won't give his consent, get married without it."

"What! elope?" he exclaimed, in a stage whisper; "the very thing I was longing to suggest, only I was afraid. That is *your* advice then?"

"Doctor Sutton, I have spoken."

As may be imagined, this conversation did not take place in the centre of the room. But Wimpledale Place lacked not

those heavily curtained recesses that seem made for conference of this nature ; made too, it would appear, for the purpose of eovering the retreat of young gentlemen, like Mr. Reginald Woodridge, who are dying for the taste of a surreptitious eigar. At all events, Mr. W re-entered the apartment by the very window that had erewhile sheltered the two conspirators. They were gone separate ways, but Sylvia happening to turn her eyes, saw by the expression of Woodridge's face that he had heard all. Here was a dilemma ! She must gain him to their side, or there would assuredly be a *flasco*. She advanced towards him, and frankly said :

“ Mr. Woodridge, you know something I had rather you did not know ; but there is no help for it. May I——”

“ Miss Vandervelde, do you remember our last interview ? ”

“ I do ; and I remember something more—the faith I once had in your honour and ehivalry.”

“ Once ? ”

“ And lost ; but not utterly.” Her voice faltered as it fashioned these words. “ Reginald Woodridge, I have set my heart on their marrying. I need not explain. Do not disappoint me.”

“ Sylvia, I will not,” he replied, emphatically. They parted without exhanging another syllable.

The carpet dances were followed by charades, in which she took no part. Captain Kay, however, proved himself as much an adept at acting as he was over timbers and yawners. A eantankerous old hunks troubled with an affection of the bronchial tubes in one act ; a professional-looking bespectaeled person, who wrote upon blue-laid foolseap, with a quill pen, in another act ; and a black servant, with a tray of cups and saueers, in another, went to form, as Kate whisperingly opined

to the Doctor, the word Coffee. Captain Kay was assisted by a stock company—which included the curate—but he was certainly the principal figure in each tableau.

Other charades succeeded; notably one wherein the Doctor and Kate appeared. Sylvia watched this with great interest, and, apparently no little satisfaction. The Doctor never looked so handsome—Kate never so radiant; albeit her face wore an expression that was inscrutable to all save Woodridge and Sylvia.

“To-night, is it?” said the latter young lady to herself; “then I must be stirring. I will be with you at once, my dear,” said her eyes, in answer to an unmistakable look of appeal from our darling. “And then to terrify Burroughs into silence, or else to gag and look her up.”

The guests were loud in praise of the charades—loud and long, much to Miss Vandervelde’s annoyance. Then, one by one, they departed; the Doctor, amongst the earliest, tearing away towards Heatherthorp, at a rate that spoke much for his horsemanship and knowledge of the road. He was one of the first to leave; the last—a-foot—were two young ladies, and their destination was——

CHAPTER XIII.

CONJOINTLY INSPIRED BY HIS MASTER’S EXPLOIT ON THE MOOR, THE RESULT OF HIS OWN WAGERING, AND THE RESOURCES OF MARTIN SILLERY’S COMMISSARIAT, CRISP POURS FORTH HIS SOUL IN SONG. THE DOCTOR, ASSISTED BY HIS SERVANT, BEGINS TO TAKE A LEADING PART IN A MODERN—AND PROSAIC—VERSION OF THE BALLAD OF YOUNG LOCHINVAR.

IF there was one accomplishment upon which, above all others, Mr. Essom prided himself, it was his carving. Not as a carver of wood, like Grinling Gibbons, nor of

Carrara marble, like Gibson, did he deem himself superior to his neighbours ; but as a deft dissector of toothsome birds—an artistic slicer of juicy joints. Severely impressive when dealing with the church-rate question, wearing an air of shrewd knowingness during his disquisitions on sporting matters, and appearing quite masterful while he manipulated those instruments of Sheffield manufacture wherewith he earned his bread and cheese, Mr. Essom looked and was great when, presidentially seated at the head of the table, he operated on haunch or saddle or bird. Nettled at his losses over the principal event of the meeting (for so the match was considered), he had resolved to mortify the flesh by absenting himself from what mine host of the Sursingle was pleased to denominate “the spread.” Mine host was in despair. Who the deuce *was* to carve, goodness knew ! (Herein please to observe that dining *à la Russe* had yet to find favour in the eyes of Heatherthorp.) *He* could not, that was a certainty. What with having to keep an eye on the bar, and an eye on his daughter—deep in the little bills of those gentlemen who were obliged to depart by the up express—and an eye on the kitchen, and an eye on the head she-cook—a clever person, but in business prone to imbibition—and another on the stables, with certainly another on the master of his horse (otherwise the head ostler, whose most objectionable trait, at vespers—when he became a conspicuous proof of the potency of the Sursingle tap—took the form of undue familiarity with his clients,) he, even Martin Sillery, was just about at his wits’ end as it was. Indeed, if he could manage to look in upon his guests for a few minutes after dinner, that would be all. He begged and prayed of Essom not to forsake him in the hour of his need. Come, now !

Essom yielded. But, although his vanity was tickled by the

fervour of Sillery's appeal—wherein he saw nothing comic; carving was too serious a subject to be laughed at—he was too acute a diplomatist to over-hastily betray his subjugation. If he had yielded, Essom should not be made aware of the fact yet.

“You know, Mr. Essom,” piteously continued the landlord, “that there's never a one among 'em fit to handle a carver as it ought to be handled; and it cuts me to the bone to see my best joints haggled as though they had been dug into with a hay-spade at a picnic. And as for the birds! Lor, bless you! Ask for a wing, and I'll bet you ten to one they send you—oh! yes *they'll* send you a wing!—and half the breast and a small bone, and about two inches of the back into the bargain! Mr. Essom, it's awful! I repeat, it's awful! Now, don't leave me in the lurch.”

“Well, well, Sillery, we'll see,” replied our friend, with an air of lofty yet complacent condescension. “If my luck was only to turn I would not mind; but when a fellow has been dropping it, and dropping it as I've been dropping it, what heart has he for enjoying himself? It takes all that sort of thing out of him, you know.”

“Oh, never fear? Come and have a nip out of my private bottle.”

This agonising conversation took place on the moor during one of those provoking lulls which occur at the best-regulated race-meetings, and are the conspicuous feature of meetings not the best regulated. The local starter was testing the patience of his public by performing with a red flag a series of experiments of a bull-baiting character. He was striving hard to discover the best means of not despatching a field of seven sober-minded horses for the penultimate race of the meeting, and

success was crowning his efforts. He had kept the horses at the post, dancing an irregular saraband, for so protracted a period that bettors of every degree had calmly abandoned speculation; while the officials (amongst whom Sillery may almost be included, since he was responsible for what is elegantly termed the cantering) were enabled to take breath—and something to give it a flavour.

Essom's speech lubricated, and his communicativeness augmented, by the nip from Sillery's private bottle, he informed the host of the Sursingle, in the highly metaphorical language of the Turf, that he had put the pot on that journey, and if it came off crabs he was stumped. He had backed a reg'lar nailer, a cove that could give tons to any of the others.

"What's more," added Essom, as, in genial acquiescence to an earnest request to moisten that other eye, he raised his elbow, "*my cove's spinning*. I have had it from the owner as straight as a bolt. He has only to stand up and walk in!" The intelligent reader is under no misapprehension as to the application of Mr. Essom's pronouns. His cove was a quadruped.

Sillery, professionally anxious about the carving, yearned for Mr. Essom's owner's cove to stand up and win. His yearnings were satisfied. Mr. D. E. could now boast a trifling balance on the right side of his book.

"All right?" queried Sillery, as Essom emerged from the weighing-room, whither he had hurried to see his cove safely past the scale.

"All right!" replied Essom, with emphasis. They were happy.

Thrice in the course of this veracious history has the chronicler exhibited the leading actors therein at dinner

Marvel not ; wonder rather that he feels it incumbent upon him to mention the fact deprecatingly. Great is the institution of dinner ; great and useful, especially when a "situation" is required in the pattern novel or play of Society.

Martin Sillery's banquet was in honour of their noble selves only, unlike certain civic noble selves, and the noble selves of hospital boards, the party over which Mr. Essom presided would not have scrupled to admit that they had met for the purpose of mutual admiration whilst indulging in creature-comforts and miscellaneous melody. The thirst which came in with the fish, and was unallayed when the quivering ruins of an extensive blanc-mange (Miss Sillery's contribution to the banquet) was borne from the board, was provoked anew by the oratorical efforts of the chairman ; yet the time for the inhalation of tobacco and the incontinent consumption of spirituous liquors had not arrived.

Essom placed unquestioning reliance on the dignity he so well knew how to assume as a means of maintaining in perfect subjection the convivialities placed under his control ; and with reason. Feeling deeply the responsibility that rested on his shoulders, he discharged the functions that belonged to his office with an air that would have told with a pragmatic local board of health : would have been nearly adequate to the requirements of a powerful association of self-sufficient freemen. He was a born vestryman, and his presidential qualities, not altogether untinged by the asperities of his political creed, were loftily "pronounced." It was at the peril of an ebullient "jolly good fellow" to set at nought, *his* decrees ! Radical though he was, he was loyal. Hear him dispose of the "usual loyal and patriotic toasts," et cetera, which, according to the newspapers invariably precede, et cetera. As thus :—

"Gentlemen all," a pause, succeeded by silence so profound "a pin might," et cetera—"Gentlemen all. The Queen—God bless her! Bumpers, gentlemen, and—wine."

The august formalities incidental to his present office becomingly discharged, the waiters were vouchsafed an entrance, whereupon the noisy jingle of substantial rummers, and the rattle of superior churchwardens, afforded presumptive evidence that the company were about to make a night of it in downright Yorkshire earnest. During the few minutes' confusion that attended the characteristic hesitancy of the various Ganymedès as to the precise destination of the several orders with which they had been entrusted, Mr. Essom, daintily poising his straw the while, mentally arranged the programme. A rich experience had convinced him that the best possible start in the shape of harmony was "something with a chorus." He therefore promptly marked down his chorister, a melodious plumber and glazier who rejoiced in one of those distressingly bland visages that are incapable of expressing anything but gentle joy. Knowing he was about to be called on, he vainly strove to assume an air of unconsciousness as he cleared his thorax for the purpose of making the usual pulmonary excuse.

The convivial president rose and begged to observe that, in his humble opinion, the time for harmony had arrived. (Hear, hear.) He would, therefore, exercise his prerogative by calling upon his esteemed friend Mr. Turps to oblige with Twanky-dillo. (Vociferous applause, mingled with exclamations of "A noble call!")

Mr. Turps would have been most happy, he was sure, but he was at that moment suffering from cold. They would notice his hoarseness. ("No, no!" "Come, Turps!") Well, he

would *try*, and if he broke down, they—utterly spoilt the roundness of his remark by a burst of applause.

Mr. T.'s mode of carolling was peculiar. Unlike most amateur minstrels, he refrained from fixing his gaze on a crack in the ceiling, or a globe of the chandelier. He bent his beaming face full on the audience, and with philanthropic impartiality distributed the beams all round. The effect of this effusion of gentle joviality was rendered more impressive by the waving of his right hand, not as a means of marking time, but to knock down, as it were, the points of the song. Upon Mr. Macarthy and the other strangers present Mr. Turps' gestures exercised a somewhat disturbing influence, by causing them to burst into the chorus at inappropriate periods. The touching expression of pity which the minstrel bestowed on the erratic choristers failed to add to their composure. The aim of the ballad was two-fold : praise of the British blacksmith, and glorification of the beverage manufactured by the British brewer. A national song, the burthen whereof ran—phonetically—something like this: "Which it makes my bright ham-mer for to^arise and to fall, says the old coal to the young coal and the young coal OF ALL." ("of all" *fortissimo*). "Twankydillob, twankydillob, twanky-dillob, dillob, dillob, dillob, dil-OH! Oh, he who drinks good ale is the prince of good fel-LOWS!"

The company were now warmed through and through, thanks to the influence of the cabalistic word Twankydillob. Everybody was delighted, because everybody felt assured the grand success was chiefly due to his individual exertions. Thenceforward the chairman's task became easy enough. Mr. Turps "made good his call," and a thick cheesemonger with a thin organ forthwith hung his harp on a willow tree, and was off

to the wars again. Then came a shower of toasts and sentiments, varied by an inspiriting scena called "The maniac," for which a mild draper's assistant was responsible; and "Old Towler," trolled right manfully by Emsden King.

The toasts and sentiments were not equally successful, a circumstance attributable to their remarkably extensive scope. "May the hinges of hospitality never grow rusty," fell flat in comparison with the wish that those who love the crack of a whip might never want a brush to pursue. If a resolution condemning all vulcipedes to capital punishment had been put to the vote, the ayes would have it by an overwhelming majority. "May our friends always possess the three H's: health, honour, and happiness," suffered rather in the enunciation, in consequence of the proposer omitting the crucial letter. But a letter, especially such a shadowy customer as H, was neither here nor there at that time of night. The latent patriotism of the assembly found vociferous vent when a true-born Briton in the leather interest called for "Short shoes and long corns to the enemies of great Britain;" whilst the homicidal wish—"May the poor man with a bad wife soon have a wedding day!" was emphatically if murmuringly carried. Then a close-fisted contractor warbled forth his desire for them "all to love one another," with a view to their "flying up to heaven like birds of a feather;" after which the chairman rose to propose the toast of the evening.

He said he felt assured they were all genuine sportsmen (Hear, hear.) He was, and he was not ashamed to own it, either there or elsewhere, as they knew. (Applause.) On other matters, especially in respect of the vital political questions of the day, they might, and in fact, did differ; but in respect of the great question of sporting he would dare

to affirm that there never was a Quaker among 'em. (Laughter, and a voice, "One for old Barjona.") The voice was Crisp's.

"You are fully aware, gentlemen," continued the chairman, "that I stood the wrong one in the match which was decided yesterday." (Crisp: "That thou did!") "I can cheerfully pardon the remarks of our friend Mr. Crisp; but I must ask him to subdue his enthusiasm until I have concluded, when he will be afforded an opportunity of expressing his sentiments *without interruption*." ("Without interruption," severely emphasized; cheers, and—"Gan on wi' thou," from Crisp.) "Very well, gentlemen, having bestowed my bullion—I say, having bestowed my bullion on the loser, you will at least give me credit for thorough disinterestedness if I ask you to drink with all the honours, the health of the winner." (Loud cheers, and, *sotto voce*, from Crisp, "Thou's a better bred 'un than I thowt thou was," followed, in the same tone, by a "Whist, can't thou?" from Golightly, his next-door neighbour.) "The oldest and most sagacious turf campaigner could not have managed his horse more admirably than Dr. Sutton managed Kelpie ("True"), and he rides like an artist. (Applause.) I dropped a tidy sum over the match, but I am happy to say that I got round on the meeting." (Macarthy, *sotto voce*, "And isn't it myself wishes I could say the same!") "But whether that were so or not I should never have but one opinion about Doctor Sutton. He is a sportsman, gentlemen, of whom Heatherthorp is justly proud. Here's his jolly good health, and long may he live to play cricket as some of us have seen him play." (Crisp—very low in tone—"So thou's convarted at last, is thou?" Golightly: "Haud thy tongue, can't thou?") "and ride as we have seen him ride. Doctor Sutton's

health; and permit me to couple with his name that of his trainer, Mr. Crisp."

So long and prolonged was the noise that cheered the chairman on the conclusion of his speech—Essom had made a great point by adroitly coupling Crisp's name with the Doctor's, and the company saw it—Sillery thought to himself, "Well, it is lucky I let them have this room, and *not* the other to kick up their row in." This room, fortunately for the landlord (if the truth must be told, he was a little put out in consequence of having had sundry little bills taxed by certain racing men who had uttered expletives during the process), was so situated in relation to the main portion of the hotel, that it might have been turned out of the windows without in the least disturbing the slumbers of the temporary sojourners beneath his lintel. The hall (of course it was a hall) was supported on one side by a fragrant brewery, and on the other by an extensive range of stables; it commanded a comprehensive view of the Sursingle yard, and boasted a convenient, if complicated, right of way from the Wimpleside. Now Martin Sillery was liberal, in the most exhaustive sense of that most illused word. Hence the spacious hall in question was, for a consideration, at the disposal of any well-behaved person or persons who might chance to require it. In addition to those highly talented but incomprehensible impecunious wanderers, who occasionally "took," the hall, it was periodically occupied by one of the brassiest of brass bands from the dales, a flourishing society of Free (and Easy) Gardeners, and a Young Men's Temperance Association, who took unwarrantable liberties with Shakspeare and Campbell, and indulged in teetotal melodies adapted to the seductive strains of burnt-cork minstrelsy by the poetical pastor of an Independent Church.

Ready enough of speech on ordinary occasions, Crisp could scarcely find a word to say on this. He rose deliberately, carefully removed his glass, as if to give himself more room, as carefully restored it to its original place, spilled some of the contents, sipped the rest, traced a diagram of nothing at all upon the table, raised his eyes to Essom, and began.

“Mr. Chairman: Gentlemen all——”

“Hear, hear,” observed the plumber and glazier, who had erewhile distinguished himself in Twanky-dillo; whereupon there was, firstly, a disorderly request for “order,” and, secondly a desire on the part of Golightly, who spoke in a peremptory, and personally-outraged tone of voice, for them to “give him time.” The chairman waved his hand.

“I’m nobbut a moderate speech-maker, but if I was as glib at it as our friend the chairman I’d ha’ to pick and choose my words terribly afore I could teel you half of what I feel about Mr. Arthur—about Doctor Sutton.” Here he looked round with a glance of pride, and straightened himself. The mention of his master’s name appeared to do him good. As for his hearers, they—forgot to applaud. “I have pretty much my own way, gentlemen, up yonder,” suggesting his master’s residence by a slight movement of the head, “but I’d need; I’m an old servant of the Suttons, and as for Mr. Arthur—I’ve known him for so many years, nineteen come Lady-day—I say I have known him so long, I look upon him, if you understand me (*he wad if he was here*) more like a son than a master.” Another pause, during which Crisp refreshed himself with Golightly’s grog.

“In a manner of speaking I may say he was nobbut a yearling when I took him in hand, and off *and* on he’s never been out of my hands sin’, Surely there’s verra

little of his sporting he does not owe to me, as he'd tell you if he was here. I was the first to put his little fat legs across a horse; the first to show him how to handle a creckit stick."

Another pause.

"Never mind that. He's no 'casion to be ashamed of his bringings up i' that way; an' ye knaw it!" The last three words with emphasis.

"However, he went away, and I—I fancied I wanted a change—took another place. But I was back in t'owd place when he returned to help his father i' doctoring; then he cam' here, and I cam' with him. Mr. Chairman and gentlemen all, I'm nearly done. My master's a gentleman, upright, down-right, *and* thoroughbred. Gentlemen are not common now-a-days, remember. There's never an individual that ever was under him wouldn't go through fire and water to serve him, and if t'dumb animals that have him for master could speak they'd say the same."

He sat down, but, recollecting himself, rose again, thereby putting a stop to the applause his simple garrulity had provoked, and said—

"I am much obliged to you for mentioning me with Mr. Arthur. I can say nowt about myself, but if you have no objection I'll just try a bit of a sang."

"Weel done, Mat; thou could pipe a bit years syne," exclaimed Golightly.

"That's not now, John; but never mind, I'll do my best."

"Bravo!" patronisingly ejaculated the chairman; "perhaps Mr. Sillery will pass the word for the waiters to remain outside until the conclusion of Mr. Crisp's song."

In a voice somewhat cracked in its upper register, but sturdy and musical withal, Crisp sang—

Let the cobwebs of age bedim eyes that once twinkled
 With joy at the peal of a loud tallyho !
 And feet, that at sunrise spurned uplands dew-sprinkled,
 Prove false as through turnips and stubble we go ;
 Though life's Springtide leave us, its Michaelmas grieve us,
 The Winter old-womanish service compel,
 We never knock under—we sportsmen—believe us !
 Breeding will tell !

In the thick of the scrummage, at football or fighting,
 Behold the brave youngster, whose breeding is true !
 Across a stiff country, well-mounted, he's right in
 Advance of the field with a stout fox in view.
 Steady stayer, fleet goer—rough wrestler, fine rower
 (You judge of the kernel by bruising the shell),
 We cry, when the pinching he stands without flinching
 Breeding will tell

A handsomer colt never danced on the daisies !
 That satin coat covers tough sinews : yet hold !
 Let him collar the hill ere you carol his praises :
 Base metal will glisten as grandly as gold !
 Behold him ! he's cut it ! ears drooping, flag working !
 The beauty's a craven ! *That other runs well :*
 She is plain and three-corner'd, but—hasn't learnt shirking !
 Breeding will tell !

Sneer not, though yon oldster who handles the willow
 Has white in his whisker ; just wait till he's warm !
 There's a drive ! can you beat it, my eager young fellow ?
 Though his joints have grown rusty he hasn't lost form !
 Then stand to the bowling, boys ! spank it or snick it !
 Score on, if 'tis fated that you shall excel ;
 And, warned of the bowler who must take your wicket,
 Think—breeding will tell !

“ How dare you enter the room in such a noisy manner while a gentleman is singing ? ”

“ After you and the others were expressly forbidden.”

"I waited for the chorus, sir——"

"You waited for the chorus, sir! Don't reply to me. Don't bandy words with me! There is something you will not have to wait for, let me tell you; and that is notice to leave my service. Understand that."

"I really beg your pardon, but if you will only hear——"

"I will do nothing of the sort, sir," hotly rejoined the landlord, who was not at all sorry for an opportunity of dispersing the ire that had been raised by the taxing of his little bills.

The pilloried waiter, a supremely negative person, and a useful, could not get in a word edgewise. "Hear you, indeed! Are my orders to be disobeyed and my guests disturbed to suit you? You heard the chairman request me to keep the waiters out of the room until the gentleman had finished his song, and, nevertheless, you rush in without a *With your leave* or a *By your leave*, like an uncultivated cow. I am surprised, Williams; you of all my men ought to have known better."

"But, sir——"

"Don't sir me, sir! I am disgusted."

"Although your master has every reason to be annoyed at your unpardonable contravention of his orders," observed the chairman, mediatorily, "I might say of *my* request *and* his orders, if you have any explanation to make, I have no doubt Mr. Sillcry will listen to it, and perhaps for this time forgive the offence.

"Oh, bother the office!" exclaimed Mr. Macarthy, who, overflowing with whiskey and music, was burning to sing the song of the Blunderskull Blazers; "sittle it afterwards. Here's your jolly good health and song, Mither Crisp! Mr. Chairman, some more harmony!"

"If you will allow me, gentleman, I should like it settled

now. Though I *am* a waiter, I am a Briton, and have a right to fair play."

"Oh! go on," said the landlord, pceevishly; "my mind is made up."

"And so is mine," replied the waiter, who by this time (remembering his value in the establishment) had managed to stiffen his back, "so is mine, Mr. Sillery. If you had permitted me to speak out, sir, you would have heard that Doctor Sutton galloped into the yard while Mr. Crisp was singing, that he wants Mr. Crisp immediately, and desires to see you at the same time about a trap to drive him to Billingham Gimlet to see a patient, for he says the mare is knocked up and Kelpie wants rest."

"Why the deuce didn't you tell me all this before?" exclaimed mine host of the Sursingle.

"Yes, why could you not tell him before?" added the chairman. "Who knows but what Doctor Sutton's getting speedily on to Billingham Gimlet is of the utmost importance?"

"Well," replied the amazed waiter, opening his wondering eyes as much as the lids would allow, "well, I'm——"

The victim of overwhelming tyranny was not permitted to complete his may-be highly improper remark. Sillery hustled him from the room.

"Good night, gentlemen; I must be off," said Crisp.

"Good night!" in concert replied his boon companions: the plumber-and-glazier adding, by way of a parting greeting, "I should have been glad to hear another song from you, sir; but duty—duty. I know."

Crisp hurried down into the yard and found the Doctor impatiently pacing up and down, as though powerfully excited.

Widow Malone stood hard by, and it was evident from the steam that enveloped her, and the flecks of foam that here and there speckled her coat, that she had not been over indulged during the journey from Wimpliedale to Heatherthorp.

"Come, come, Mat," exclaimed our hero, "what have you been dawdling about? I am quite tired of waiting. There, don't explain. I can conjecture the cause. But first of all let me have a good look at you."

"Taking Crisp by the sleeve he hastily led him to the bar-window. In the blaze of light which lit up that portion of the main entrance to the hotel Crisp stood for a minute, while his master peered closely into his face. The Doctor was tolerably well satisfied with the inspection, for he exclaimed—

"Yes—you will do, Matthew. At the same time you will be none the worse for drinking a bottle of soda and dashing a little cold water into your face. See to this at once, Mat, and ask no questions—yet. While you are bracing yourself up a bit, I will run home and get some medicine. Never mind the mare. She must wait. By the time I return let the trap be quite ready, for there is not a minute to spare. You will have to drive. Now, Mat, if ever you were wide-awake and up to work you must be now. I ask this as a favour. I will explain when we get on the road.

"What is the trap?" inquired Crisp of the under-ostler.

"Brome."

"Light?"

"Middling. 'Tisn't heavy. I'll go that far."

"Good nag?"

"A mare we got from Yarm fair last week."

"Fresh?"

"As a daisy. She hasn't done a mite of work since yesterday."

"That's right. Now, leave them traces half a minute, and give us a turn at the pump."

The ostler obeyed, and Crisp, all the better for his primitive but copious refresher, assisted the ostler to yoke the mare, and then departed in search of soda water.

Sillery, who had been unable to exchange words with the Doctor, encountered Crisp at the bar-door.

"Jim has been smart, I hope, Crisp," observed he. "Ah! then we shall keep our character. And now is there anything I can do for you? You will have a cold drive, although not an unpleasant one—there's a splendid moon."

"Give me a bottle of soda and a drop of brandy in it. Mr. Arthur said nothing about the brandy," he added to himself; "but he surely never intended me to take the other stuff alone."

The Doctor was not long absent. In fact he had merely tied up Widow Malone, written half a dozen words to Mr. Robson, provided himself with a further supply of the current coin of the realm, and slightly changed his raiment when he returned. But how absent-minded he was, to be sure! he had actually forgotten the medicine he had signified his intention of bringing with him.

"Now, Crisp, my man, are you perfectly ready?"

"Yes, Mr. Arthur."

In three minutes the brougham was outside the town at a point where the main road diverges into another leading to Billingham Gimlet. Dr. Sutton pulled the check-string.

"Straight on towards Wimpledale Place."

Crisp whistled—inaudibly.

"As fast as you can go. Don't pull up till you reach Squire Wilson's gate."

"All right."

CHAPTER XIV.

MISS VANDERVELDE AND MR. WOODRIDGE, SINGLY AND TOGETHER, ENDEAVOUR BY DIVERS ARTFUL DODGES TO BRING ABOUT THE COMPLETE DISCOMFITURE OF TIMOTHY WILSON, ESQUIRE, NOW MAKING A CAST FOR HIS MISSING DAUGHTER. LOVE LAUGHS AT LOCKSMITHS, AND HYMEN IGNORES CANONICAL HOURS.

BOTH Sylvia and the Doctor had, without comparing notes, resolved that the week of the race-meeting should see the end of the siege. If Kate's father did not then surrender at discretion, the citadel should be stormed, and his treasure carried off; or, in other words, if he persisted in refusing his consent to Kate's marriage with the Doctor, Sylvia was resolved that the Doctor, if he were willing, should dispense with the parental approval. The Doctor had come to the same determination—from no process of reasoning, as was the case with Sylvia—and it was that which occupied his mind on the afternoon of the day he had ridden the match with Woodridge, when he was overtaken by Kate and Sylvia on their return from the course.

Doctor Sutton entertained a very proper regard for himself. It was possible Mr. Wilson might long have the bad taste to consider him an inappropriate son-in-law; but he was SURE that Kate—bless her!—would not for a moment hesitate to set her papa at open defiance, even if her mutiny took such a shocking shape as a runaway marriage! He longed to inform Miss Vandervelde that an old college chum, the incumbent of Holy Trinity, Stokesbro'—a market town twenty miles distant from Heatherthorp, on the main line—had undertaken “to turn him

off" on the very shortest notice, and, in furtherance of his fate, promised to transmit him by return of post, whenever he required it, the special licence, conveniently made out in respect of dates and names, and the whole duly authenticated by the addition of the proper august sign-manual. Dr. Sutton had written to the Rev. George Wyke, incumbent of Holy Trinity, on the morning of the party at The Place, and when he bade Mat wait until he ran home for some medicine, he had nothing but the above essential legal instrument in view. It was not there. Either his own letter had miscarried, or Wyke was from home. This was a mortifying misadventure to begin with, but haply not irremediable. Anyhow, he was not the sort of fellow to relinquish his enterprise because of a rebuff on its threshold. He rejoined Crisp, and took to the road right manfully, as we have seen.

As to Sylvia and her part in the rapidly ripening crisis, it is scarcely sufficient to repeat the trite observation about women being an enigma; albeit only on the score of the enigmatical nature of the lovely woman who stoops to the folly of rehabilitating an old love could *she* be explained. Miss Vandervelde, deep in her heart, had forgiven Woodridge; she knew that he knew it; the knowledge afforded her serene pleasure. She *had* loved him once, remember, and latterly he had shown himself so much like her ideal, the old feeling had come to rosy life again. The mainspring of her regard for Reginald was unsuspected. She thought—poor girl!—if she gave the matter a thought—that she was merely rendering him frigid justice when she admired the mare he rode in the match, and the colours he wore: when she pointed out to Kate how much he had improved, and how much pleasanter he was for the snubbing he had received.

As for Woodridge, the point he reached was that Sylvia was a deuced jolly girl, after all, and as he was one of those fellows who see neither rhyme nor reason in breaking your heart over a girl that won't have you, you know, well—he'd let Syl see that he bore no malice: not a bit of it! Then there was that old Wilson. He certainly owed *him* one for making him such an ass; and—strong expression—he'd help the Doctor—no, not exactly that, he meant he would help Syl to help the Doctor to run away with Kate! He would, by Jove! Then who knew? At this point in his meditations Burroughs presented him with a note. It was in Miss Vandervelde's once familiar characters. Again he retired without the balcony. The perusal of a diminutive scrap of feminine caligraphy, by the subdued light that shines from a wintrily-curtained window, may be pronounced a sufficiently difficult task; but Reginald Woodridge accomplished it in brief space. He read it with more than his eyes! The missive provoked from him an audible remark of an emphatic nature, and—he was alone!—a passionate tribute to the sentiment of the hour and the occasion. Behold him place his lips where Sylvia had inscribed her dainty signature.

“Stokesbro,’ is it, Syl? Very well, my love. I will be there.” Twenty minutes after saw him, oblivious of the company's bye-laws, sedulously impregnating the cushions of a first-class carriage with another full flavoured one. His destination was Stokesbro.’

In these tryings back let us not lose sight of our darling, bonny Kate! She is the Desdemona of these chronicles, recollect, if the Emilia of it has been undertaken by a lady so accustomed to “lead.” Behind the scenes of the charades, she, in coy fear and trembling, hearkened to, but only half compre-

hended Miss Vandervelde's rapid remarks. As the flight she had whisperingly consented to just before the lifted curtain revealed the significant tableau we have taken note of,—as this same terrible elopement was coolly arranged by stronger-minded Sylvia, she gasped out—

“My dear, I shall never go through with it. I never, never shall! And you forbid me a little ‘good night’ to papa. Oh, dear! if he should never forgive me!” Here Kate agitatedly called into requisition a delicate French cambric handkerchief.

“I expected this, Kate; but—courage!—I won't be harsh, not I—Your papa! Forgiveness? He is as sure to forgive you as—I can't think of a comparison strong enough—well, as your Arthur—never—*never* would if you were to leave him in the lurch at the last moment.”

“Oh, Sylvia!”

“If you saw your delightfully obstinate—pigheaded is the correct word, I believe—papa to night, it would ruin everything. Fancy: you on your knees, ready on the very slightest encouragement to become, like Niobe, all tears.’ You try to bid him good night,—your voice trembling with highly-becoming, but exceedingly inopportune agony, runs away with you. It says what it chooses; you——”

“Sylvia——”

“Stop a bit. I repeat, you try to bid him good night; somehow or other you don't say that, but good-bye, or adieu, or farewell. Your papa, who has hitherto had no cause to accuse you of using poetry when prose would serve, starts to his feet (as well as he can, poor old gentleman, considering the gout), observes your confusion, hastily inquires its cause.—you confess! and—what next, think you, Kate?”

“You exaggerate, I am positive.”

“Why, *my* rapid and energetic, if not forcible, expulsion from Wimpledale Place. *Your* immediate incarceration in a strong room, on a lowering diet of bread and water,—or, perhaps your banishment and Doctor Arthur Basinghall Sutton’s heartrending despair.” This last shot told, Kate’s face brightened, as she said in a voice, rich with feeling—

“Sylvia, I have promised him, and I will keep my word. My father, I think, will not cast me off,”—and her pretty hazel eyes for a moment looked their saddest, and wistfully accorded with the tremulousness of her sweet mouth : “No, Syl, I think he will not cast me off. But I am Arthur’s !”

“To be sure you are, Kate ; and though I don’t deny that this is a most serious undertaking for a young lady like yourself, I would be the last to espouse your cause if I saw nothing in the flight but its romance. Depend upon it, Kate, you have little to fear in the future. Arthur Sutton is nearly all you think he is, and that is saying worlds in his favour. So, no more preaching. Run to your room and make your preparations. Send Burroughs to me, and then return to your guests.”

And so the two girls separated : Kate to hurry the preparations for her flight,—to possess herself of her jewels in case of—what ? She dared not answer the half-formed question ; and Miss Vandervelde to play the hostess until Kate reappeared and said Society’s conventional adieux to the departing guests.

Burroughs ! We have rather neglected that young person lately. Burroughs was both surprised and indignant when her mistress intimated that, after Miss Vandervelde had seen her, she could dispense with her services for the remainder of the night. As she had had a harassing day (how nice and considerate of Miss Wilson !) did not she think she had best retire ? Burroughs made no reply, but duly waited on Miss Vandervelde,

who curiously enough reiterated Miss Wilson's recommendation. Did not she think, now, it would be best to retire forthwith? She did *not* think so, for a reason she had; but as she rather feared Miss Vandervelde, she quieted that imperative young lady with a vague kind of promise, and retired to the house-keeper's room to air her awakened suspicions, and finish a flirtation with Jones, the gamekeeper.

"The devil's in the moon for mischief," wrote he whose memory has supplied a tuft-hunting Yankee authoress with an unpleasant excuse for airing her aristocratic connections in the old country. Until the particular moment the brougham containing Doctor Sutton emerged from the portals of the Sursingle Arms the moon had sulkily withheld her beams. But she rose from behind a curtain of shaggy cloud as the vehicle rattled along the High street, and revealed to all whom it might concern Matthew Crisp, in his hastily-assumed character of Jehu.

Whether it concerned her or not, Miss Priscilla Cardmums, given, in the interest of the local paper to courting the muses at unwholesome hours, saw the Doctor's man taking it out of the nag.

"Ah!" she murmured, sighingly, "Doctor Sutton! Ever pursuing his mission of mercy and love in that high spirit of self-abnegation which so eminently characterises him! How few there are who are imbued with such nobility of soul! Few indeed; alas, few indeed! Ah! Doctor Sutton; had we met ten years since——." The chaise by this time had turned the corner. She stayed not to finish the emotional sentence whose beginning was so suggestive, but resumed her pen and courted the muses with augmented ardour.

Nathan Barjona was innocent of making poetry, and seldom given to its perusal. Even Bernard Barton's gentle strains

enthralled him not. His furtive appearance at the window of his bedchamber the while Miss Cardmums was enjoying a moony look-out from hers, was attributable to commonplace causes. The fact is, Nature's soft nurse having, for dyspeptic reasons, declined to steep his senses in forgetfulness, he had betaken himself to the window for the purpose of giving one of his senses an astronomical and panoramic treat.

"It is evident," observed night-capped Nathan to himself, as he raised the blind, "that homœopathy is unequal to the task of coping with the peculiarities of my mortal frame. Or, could it be the port? I think not. No, no. It *could not* be the port.

What a placid moon! 'Tis almost as light as noonday. Ugh! it's chilly, and there's a thick reek on the far side of the five-acre that tells me this is not a favourable night for one that's troubled with a winter cough. Why, what can that fool Thomas—that I should be led to bestow such an epithet on a fellow-Christian—have been thinking about? He has left the garden gate open. However, the town must be pretty clear of the vagabonds that swarmed to the moor yesterday and to-day, so I will not disturb the house. But to-morrow—to-morrow, friend Thomas, thou shalt feel the weight of my rebuke, I promise thee.

"No; I am not at all well. And I have not been well since I differed in opinion with that misguided young man, Sutton. Wheels! Who can it be at this untimely hour? Surely not—yes—no—it is that uncivil fellow Matthew Crisp, and driving as though he meant to break his own neck and the horse's knees. There is someone in the chaise, too: his master. They take the road to Billingham Gimlet. No; they pull up; and now they turn off towards the railway station. What *can* it all mean? Ugh! it's intensely cold. I will retire, and to-

morrow communicate with Essom. This matter must be investigated."

Said Matthew Crisp to his master when they were quite clear of the suburbs of Heatherthorp, "Mr. Arthur!"

"Well, Mat, what's the discovery? some one ahead of us?"

"No, sir, nowt o' that. And I suppose it wadn't fash either on us verra much if there was. Ye didn't happen to get a gliff ov awd Barjona as we passed his house, eh?"

"No, certainly not. Barjona? Nor you either."

"Aw did, though. I saw his dowly awd head up at bedroom window. And verra pratty it leuk'd iv a woollen neetcap. Ha! ha. All't toon'll knaw about our journey as sune as Essom oppens shop."

"Let it!" exclaimed the Doctor, with energy. "What do I care?"

"And why sud ye, Mr. Arthur? 'specially about such a gauvison as awd Barjona. He's like a coo, wi' twea sides to his tung, a rough un and a smooth un; but neebody minds him, sir, nae matter which side he licks 'em with."

After enunciating this profound bucolic figure with contemptuous gusto, Crisp relapsed into silence, and again addressed himself to taking it out of Sillery's bit of horseflesh.

Loyal to the letter but false to the spirit of her mistress's injunctions was Kate's maid, Miss Martha Burroughs. She was not going to bed till she thought fit. She was sure, indeed! Was she no better than an African slave to be ordered off just when her mistress thought proper? Oh dear no! Mrs. Raye, the housekeeper, and Mr. Jones, the gamekeeper, and Elizabeth Morrell, the still-room maid, might severally and collectively depend upon it, as sure as they were sitting there drinking that port wine negus, there was some-

thing in the wind, and find out what that something was she would before she was many hours older.

Perhaps the negus was too potent for Miss Burroughs, or, it may be, that a last sip with Mr. Jones (whose negus had the appearance and odour of gin-hot) was too many for her; but by-and-bye she became emotional, and wept freely on Mrs. Raye's shoulder. She should not care, she said, if Miss Wilson would only treat her with that confidence which one lady ought to bestow on another. Then she waxed hilarious, and declared, if Elizabeth would only accompany her, she would see Mr. Jones part of his way home. (Mr. J., it should be observed, was a single man and a thrifty, who had long been credited with a vast admiration—at a proper distance—of Miss Wilson's maid.) Mrs. Raye was greatly scandalised by the proposal; but as Burroughs was not to be denied, the old lady at length consented, and the trio left The Place, Mrs. Raye having previously promised Elizabeth to sit up until their return.

The last carriage was rattling homeward along the main road; the musicians from Shipley were partaking of a substantial repast in the servants' hall, previous to their trudging to the station with a view to the earliest third-class train; Mrs. Raye was sleeping soundly, and demonstratively, in her easy-chair, when the two fugitives, our bonny Kate and her friend Sylvia, stepped from one of the drawing-room windows into the garden, and hurried thence to the entrance of a footpath that led to the Heatherthorp entrance to the grounds.

"Oh, Syl," said Kate, "let us go back. I feel ready to drop; I do, indeed; and I tremble all over."

"When you are done trembling, we will proceed. What nonsense! One would think you were going to your execution. Be a woman, Kate.—But there, I will do your bidding.

Suppose we return? We can — unperceived too. What say you?’

There was a brief pause, and then Kate, gulping down her emotion with a mighty effort, said, in a low but firm voice, “I am ready.”

“ Sylvia kissed her, and said, “I am sure you have chosen well. You will not regret this night’s adventure, believe me.”

Just then, as though to hearten her and smile upon her resolve, the moon broke from behind a thick cloud, and threw the shadowy features of the mysterious landscape into strong relief. Kate accepted the sudden radiance as a good omen.

“How beautiful! Look, Sylvia, at those long fantastic shadows.”

“Long fantastic fiddlesticks! Pray don’t linger. We must get among these long fantastic shadows if we are to escape observation. It is very beautiful, I dare say; but since we are not astronomizing, nor studying light and shade, it would have pleased me better if this most impertinent moon had remained in bed. There, we are safe.”

They walked on in silence for some minutes, when Kate, clutching Sylvia suddenly by the arm, said, in a whisper—

“Stay! I can hear footsteps.”

“Yes; and I can hear voices.”

“What *shall* we do?”

“Wait. Can you yet distinguish anything?”

“Yes. Now I can. There are two figures. Surely they are not poachers?”

“Poachers!—in petticoats. Calm your apprehensions, my darling. They approach, and I discover in one of these nocturnal wanderers your own maid Burroughs and in the other that child Elizabeth.”

"The little still-room maid? Whatever can they be doing away from The Place at this hour?"

"I am not at present anxious to know; but if you will please to conceal yourself in the shadow of that oak, I will teach these silly women a lesson they will not speedily forget."

Whereupon Miss Vandervelde took her cloak, a sensibly-comfortable garment of considerable amplitude, and gathered it deftly about her arms; then stretching these forth in the form of the letter V, she appeared, as she stood out conspicuously in the moonlight, as eerie and preternaturally gigantic a figure as could well be conceived. There was not enough wind to stir the lightest leaf, and this singular stillness materially aided the success of her impromptu stratagem. She moved on slowly and stealthily, as yet unmarked by Burroughs and her companion, and Kate for a moment forgot herself and Arthur in the supremely-ridiculous ecstasy of the situation. She would have given anything for liberty to laugh, but, as it was, she hardly allowed herself to breathe.

Sylvia was now full in the path of Burroughs and Elizabeth. They saw her, and, clinging closely to each other, came to a full stop. In awfully cavernous tones Sylvia declaimed what seemed to Kate's English ear two lines of a German folk-song she had once heard her friend sing. Then, the while moving in the most extraordinary fashion, Miss Vandervelde poured forth a torrent of Teutonic gutturals, and finally exclaimed, after the traditional manner of provincial Lady Macbeths in the sleep-walking scene—

"Begone! Look not behind ye! or-r—beware my vengeance!"

There was no need for the ghost of the minute to utter a syllable more. Burroughs and Elizabeth, the latter indulging in a scream that would have done honour to the most powerful female lungs of modern melodrama, turned and fled, pausing not

for breath until they reached the hall, at a door of which, utterly exhausted by their terrific effort, they floundered.

"Oh, Miss Burroughs!"

"Oh, 'Lizabeth!"

"Open the door, Miss Burroughs—do."

"Not for the world. You must, Elizabeth. It's your duty. That dreadful, dreadful spectre!"

"Hush!—listen! There's footsteps."

"I know I shall faint. Hark!"

"Who's there?" said an elderly female voice at the other side of the door. The maidens huddled themselves into smaller compass, but did not deign to reply. Indeed they could not have replied if they had made the attempt. "Who's there, I say? If you don't speak it will be worse for you."

"It's me, Mrs. Raye," at length feebly articulated the exhausted still-room maid.

"Who's me?—Elizabeth?"

"Yes, 'm."

A bolt was withdrawn, and Mrs. Raye opened the door. Her slumbers had been rudely disturbed, and she was wroth.

"What is the meaning of all this rubbish? Miss Burroughs, I am surprised at you, and come what may, Miss Wilson shall know my sentiments. Elizabeth, go to bed; and if you don't tread your shoes very level, Miss, you shall go altogether; mind you that! This comes of gallivantin' with men."

Burroughs was dumb. She stared at the housekeeper in haggard response to that estimable lady's stern rebuke, groaned, and rushing into the apartment Mrs. Raye called her own, sank into a chair, and fainted away in right down earnest.

"Well, here's a pretty to-do. Elizabeth! Elizabeth, I say. She is in the sulks, I suppose. ELIZABETH!" Her vehement

summons was unheeded, and Mrs. Raye, by this time enraged beyond endurance, tugged vigorously at the first bell which came to hand, and the loud clang penetrated into the utmost recesses of the sleeping mansion. It produced an effect, too, which the ruffled housekeeper had not bargained for. "Oh! what shall I do? There's master's bell. I've woke him; he will never forgive me.—Elizabeth, you disobedient girl, run upstairs and see what your master wants, while I look to this idiot here."

That idiot there, otherwise Martha Burroughs, required seeing to. It was a case that admitted of no nonsense, so Mrs. Raye, eschewing the mild and correct remedies for feminine fainting that are affected in society, treated Miss Wilson's own maid to a copious *douche*, which brought about an instantaneous cure. The patient unclosed her eyes, and stared wildly around her. At that moment erring Elizabeth, looking as wild as her quondam companion, rushed into the apartment.

"Well?" sharply interrogated her superior.

"Was there ever such a night as this, 'm? Master is nearly mad. When I tried to tell him about the mistake you had made with the bell, 'm, he said, 'Tell Miss Wilson I want her, if she has not retired to rest.' I knocked at Miss Wilson's door, and as there was no answer, I opened it. Oh, Mrs. Raye, Mrs. Raye, Miss Katherine is gone!"

"Gone!!"

"Gone!!! " repeated Burroughs, starting to her feet.

"And where's Miss Vandervelde?"

"She's gone too! Both the young ladies' rooms are empty."

"Ah! I see it all now!—the ghost—the ghost!"

"What does she mean? Ridiculous creature that she is!"

Before Mrs. Raye could repeat the question she had put with such an air of desperate bewilderment, Burroughs had rushed from the room, and, oblivious of the proprieties, invaded Mr. Wilson's. In agitated tones she told the Squire of the figure she had seen in the grounds, which figure she took for a ghost; further, she made him acquainted with Miss Wilson's and Miss Vandervelde's remarkably earnest desire for her—Martha Burroughs' early retirement to rest. Mr. Wilson might depend upon it that the ghost was flesh and blood—one of Miss Vandervelde's outlandish tricks to terrify her and Elizabeth and throw them off the scent. It was not for her to say a word against Miss Wilson, but since Doctor Sutton——”

“ Well, what of him ? ” shouted Mr. Wilson.

“ Oh ! nothing sir ; only he was the first gentleman to leave the party ; and Jobson who assisted him to mount, said he would not have rode at that pace in the dark for fifty pounds.”

“ Jobson must be roused at once. I'll baffle that young scoundrel yet. And as for Kate—what are you staring at ? Oh ! Jobson ! Mrs. Ray must have him awoke ; and M'Cullum too. Jones is gone, I suppose ? ”

“ Yes, sir,” replied Burroughs, with a blush.

“ Not a minute must be lost in getting the carriage ready. This frightful gout. And when you have given those orders fetch me the local railway guide. Quick ! ”

Regarded in the light of a handicap, notwithstanding the crushing weight the Squire had to carry, it was only about six to four on the fugitives. Old Wilson was a man of energy, and just now his blood was up. Now one of the prejudices of his striving days clung to him yet ; he despised valets. Heroic were his present endeavours, unaided as they were to equip him for the pursuit ; heroic, if clumsy. His afflicted member sharply

announced itself ; in fact, the aristocratic twinges could not have said more if Doctor Sutton, of malice prepense, had retained them on his side. Nevertheless, harassed though he was, the Squire managed by painful stages to get ready for the disagreeable journey.

Jobson and the gardener were not so prompt in their movements. Each had indulged copiously in the conviviality of the servants' hall before retiring to rest ; both were plunged far into their first dense sleep when Mrs. Raye sounded the alarm. However, when the drowsy servitors were informed of the nature of the nocturnal expedition, and the state of Mr. Wilson's temper, they bestirred themselves, and by the time the Squire rang his bell the carriage was ready. He had given ten minutes' attention to the guide and arranged the route.

"Heatherthorp Station, Jobson, as quick as you can, to catch the through train. And keep a sharp look-out on the road."

"Very good, sir," said Jobson, who thereupon gave his spanking pair an encouraging "tch—tch !" and the carriage wheels crunched along the gravel road in the direction of the turnpike that stretches from Heatherthorp to the railway station of that name.

We must now rejoin the fugitives.

"Whatever was it you said to that silly Burroughs, Syl ?" inquired Kate of her friend as they sped through the shadows, their talk rippling with subdued laughter.

"Said? The song you know. It may be freely translated into your own couplet. Early to bed and early to rise. I could not resist the temptation of saying something ridiculously *à propos*, although it *was* in a language Burroughs comprehends not."

"But the other words ?"

"Naughty, every one of them. German expletives, my dear. But don't be distressed. They were as incoherent as a speech at a wedding-breakfast. Talking of wedding-breakfasts, I wonder where yours will be, Katey. Here's the gate, and let me see, here's the key."

"Sylvia, did you even think of that?"

"Even so. Now we are released from captivity suppose we throw one little obstacle in the path of our pursuers? There, Mr. Wilson, should you follow us hither you will either have to return, or break the lock, or get out of your carriage and walk; an exercise, by the way, you are not likely to indulge in."

"He can drive round by Jones's lodge, Syl."

"Let him, my dear; it will save time—for us. But here is our chariot, and—your Arthur."

It was the brougham from the Sursingle. In another minute the Doctor had leapt out and folded Kate in his arms, Crisp the while pretending to be deeply engaged in investigating the complications of a cheek-strap, and Miss Vandervelde discreetly looking another way.

"My darling Kate," whispered the Doctor, "let the future prove how I love the girl whose devotion has brought her here to-night."

"Dear Arthur;" said our darling, whisperingly. "Dear, dear Arthur." She could get no farther.

"Come, you children," interposed Sylvia, with an air that would have beseemed a matron of fifty; "there is no time to be wasted if that train is to be caught."

"True, you jolly old schemer," exclaimed the Doctor.

"Old, Mr. Sutton," observed Sylvia, with dignity. "I do not understand you."

"Never mind, Syl, whether you do or not. In truth I hardly

understand myself, I feel so happy. You have heaps of time for the train. Mat will drive you to the station—that is, not quite to the station, and, leaving you in the carriage, procure second-class tickets for Cruken-den.”

“Cruken-den!” exclaimed the girls in a breath.

“Yes, Cruken-den; only have patience. Tickets for Cruken-den, but you get out at Stokesbro’, darling. Sylvia must take care of you until we meet at old Wyke’s.”

“And you, Arthur?” asked Kate, anxiously.

“I? As soon as I leave you, which will be immediately, I shall walk across the fields to Billingham Gimlet, and there await a train for Shipley. Then I come on to Stokesbro’”

“For a young gentleman in your agitated state of mind, the arrangement is exceedingly sagacious.”

“I don’t mind what you say, Sylvia—not I. Adieu, my darling—but not for long.” The Doctor once more exacted his lover’s tribute, imprinted a hearty kiss upon the cheek of Miss Vandervelde, exchanged a few words with Crisp, and then set off at a rapid pace in search of the short cut across the fields to Billingham Gimlet. .

The young ladies’ part in the railway journey was accomplished with brilliant success. The clerk who booked for the uptrain in the absence of the station-master was not of an inquiring turn of mind, and the fugitives took their seats unobserved. Crisp, who now guessed what was in the wind, could not forbear giving Kate a little bit of his mind, as he handed her the tickets.

“There, Miss, and if one o’ them tickets doesn’t tak yee tee happiness, I’m sadly mistune. Mr. Arthur’s yan o’t best maisters that ever leukd through a bridle—noa, I doant mean that; but he is a good ’un, Miss, and he’s mak ye a rare good

husband. He'se forgettin tee ask me, Miss; but I *mun* be there? Where is it—Stokesbro'? Verra good. God bless you, Miss, and fareweell!"

Hot and strong were the words which were blurted from the Squire's lips when he reached the main road and found that somebody had been there before him and locked the gate.

"This is that Sylvia's doings, confounded young hussy! It's not a bit of use trying to lift the gate off the hinges; Jobson, drive round by the lodge. Ugh! It was cleverly managed, Miss Vandervelde, to prevent my saving the train, but if I don't spoil your little plan before noon, I'll see."

When Jobson pulled up at the Heatherthorp station it was too late. A porter who was sweeping the platform could give the Squire no information. A clerk who lodged a couple of miles off booked for that train, and he (the porter) had come on when the clerk went off. "Happen the folks he wanted had gone from Billingham Gimlet." Whether or not the Squire decided to drive thither, since he would be as near, Shipley, his immediate destination, as at Heatherthorp. News! The station-master at "the Gimlick," had not seen any young ladies, and he could assure Mr. Wilson that no young ladies would be able to leave by any of the trains without *him*, seeing them; no sir; in fact, the only gentleman he had booked that night was Doctor Sutton, of course Mr. Wilson knew *him* who looked as though he had been walking fast, and said he must reach Shipley soon, as he had been called to an urgent case there.

"I'll urgent case him, impudent young scoundrel!" muttered Mr. Wilson between his teeth.

"Did you speak, sir? The next train to Shipley, sir? Why there's nothing till the five o'clock slow. There's a good

fire in the waiting-room, and if you want a snooze, I'll undertake to call you in time."

"Very well; be it so. And get me a ticket."

"I will, sir."

It seemed all two to one on the pursued now; yet the Squire was not out of the hunt. So long as he nursed his wrath before the waiting-room fire, his daughter was safe; but the slow train *would* arrive (slow trains occasionally do), and reaching Shipley in time to defeat the machinations of the Doctor and his clever friend Sylvia was quite within the realm of possibility.

Sutton got out at Shipley. Woodridge was awaiting him.

"This is awfully kind of you, old fellow—Miss Vandervelde prepared me for it—and I shall never be able to thank you sufficiently, I am sure."

"Oh! never mind thanks, Sutton. We'll talk about that sort of thing when you are turned off. There is no end of a lot to do this morning."

"You are right; but now I am here I confess I am rather at a loss——"

Pardon the interruption: let me first tell you what *I* have done. I met the girls at Stokesbro', and delivered them up to the wife of one of our partners, a jolly sensible woman—one of the people called Quakers. She thinks, thou knows, if Timothy Wilson will not listen to reason about his daughter Katherine, well then, his daughter Katherine, thou knows, having arrived at years of discretion, doesn't thou see, has a right to please herself."

"Capital!"

There they remain until eleven o'clock, when your chum Wyke will be ready to tie the knot. Meanwhile we'll have a

mouthful of breakfast, and I will remain here to throw dust into the eyes of the old gentleman. I'll keep him here as long as I can, and then bring him on to Stokesbro'——"

"Yes!"

"In time to be too late. Come on. When you leave me, it will be time to look up Wyke."

Squire Wilson arrived by the next train—he had broken his journey in the previous one to make inquiries—and, as Woodridge had anticipated, hailed with exultation the prospect of his unexpected help. There was no trace of the missing one in Shipley; although the Doctor had been heard of. Meanwhile the latter had made his way to Stokesbro', and learnt to his horror that the Rev. Mr. Wyke was not at home. The Squire is to be backed against the field now! What was to be done? He found the sexton—who was sexton and pew-opener, and regarded himself part proprietor of Holy Trinity—and by dint of astute cross-questioning, ascertained, or divined, that his friend was out that morning with the Stokesbro' Harriers.

"*A wedding!* There'll be nae weddin' this morning, I can promise you!" grunted forth, in acidulated tones, the wrinkled old humbug. "Aw knaw nowt aboot it: and he wad hae been sure to tell me. He couldn't *but* tell me." ("He" was Doctor Sutton's coadjutor, the parson.) *Time enough yet?* No, there isn't time enough yet. There niver was a weddin' i' this church after twelve o'clock at neun, an' what's mair, there niver will be? So there's for you."

The Doctor dared not inform Kate of the misadventure, so, without knowing why, he, bestowing a hearty malison on the sexton—who, amongst other infirmities, was happily afflicted with deafness—set off to the railway station. On the road he met Crisp.

“Aw could’nt keep away, Mr. Arthur; so ye mun forgive me. I didn’t think ye’d ha’ fand me oot, though.”

“Oh! all right, Matthew. Now, look here. You can make yourself useful. The sexton of Holy Trinity seems determined there shall not be a wedding after noon. Well, there shan’t; but *should* the parson be late—I may tell you he has not come yet—you understand, *late*—the Trinity clock must be late likewise! You know what I mean? Get the old ruffian to show you the church; liquor him well; and, if necessary—PUT BACK THE CLOCK!”

Sutton felt somewhat easier in his mind when he saw ecstatic Crisp depart on his uncanonical mission, and once again summoned the housemaid at Wyke’s. There was a telegram waiting him from her master:

“My dear Sutton, sorry I went after currant jelly. Your letter has just reached me. If train runs true will be there in time.”

“Hurrah!” exclaimed the Doctor, throwing his hat up in triumph. “Mary, come here. Your name must be Mary, you are so pretty. Were you ever married?”

“No, sir,” said she, looking down; “but I hope to be.”

“And so you shall. There’s five shillings for you.”

“What a strange gentleman,” said Mary to herself, as she smoothed her hair; “but very good-looking.”

Crisp succeeded gloriously. The sexton did the honours of the clock works, and Matthew lost no time in mystifying the citizens of Stokesbro’. That day the Holy Trinity clock lost half an hour! Thanks to Mat’s manipulation, it was ten minutes before “twelve at noon” when the Rev. Mr. Wyke began the solemn ceremony. Kate, in her quiet grey travelling costume, and bonnet which Sylvia had that morning trimmed

with orange-blossoms, looked her prettiest. Poor darling! she had scarcely fortitude to sustain her through the ordeal. That waiting in the church had been so *very* trying. However, there, with her one bridesmaid, Sylvia, whose brother was Arthur's best man—and worst, for there was none other—Kate Wilson and Arthur Basinghall Sutton were made man and wife.

Knock away, Mr. Wilson, you are too late.

CHAPTER XV.

SHOWS HOW TIMOTHY WILSON, ESQ., SET ABOUT CUTTING OFF HIS NOSE TO SPITE HIS FACE; REVEALS WOODRIDGE IN A NEW LIGHT; DESCRIBES HOW CRISP AND THE SHIPLEY UMPIRE BECAME "HAND AND GLOVE"; AND TIME-HONOURED PRECEDENTS NOTWITHSTANDING, WHILE POINTING TO THE PROXIMATE END OF THESE CHRONICLES, SEEKS TO PERSUADE THE IMPATIENT READER THAT A WEDDING IS NOT ALWAYS THE HAPPIEST ENDING TO A STORY.

THE crusty keeper of the keys of the church of Holy Trinity, Stokesbro,' contemptuously oblivious of one of the lawful rights of the British taxpayer, had for some time kept the Squire and Woodridge on the colder side of the door, over which he mounted guard. What did he care? he said. All he knew was that he had been tell'd to keep t' dear shut, and keep it shut, he wad! They might fetch 't police if they liked; but, till Mr. Wyke gave orders, he'd ncither lift sneck nor turn key for onnybody. Old Wilson, in angry earnest, vainly essayed to take the sacred edifice by storm, and Woodridge, who simply

desired delay, let him alone. Reginald had reckoned up the sexton, and become convinced that the more roughly that responsible functionary was treated the more aggressively would he show his teeth. When Mr. Wilson had railed and thumped his utmost, without causing the surly custodian to yield in the least. Woodridge thought the moment had come for him to interfere, for surely the knot was tied by then ! His speech was "silvern." His most convincing argument took the tangible form of a crown piece. But the Squire was too angry to wait, and the few seconds Reginald spent in bribing and corrupting the minor pillar of the Church, the old gentleman devoted to hammering at the inner door. "Yan wad think ye nae better, ye silly awd man !" exclaimed the heretofore inflexible custodian, as he turned the key and admitted the besiegers. They were too late.

It was an interesting group that met Mr. Wilson's gaze, as with hasty and irreverent steps he entered the vestry, Woodridge following at his heels. Kate (one ought not to designate a bride by her Christian name, but you see we have known her so long as Kate) leant confidently against her husband, who, on the old gentleman's appearance, was whispering words of reassurance in her ear. She was pale, but there was a light in her lovely eyes which showed that the pallor arose from neither timidity nor terror. Many a time ere this had Timothy Wilson been made to feel that in spirit Kate was his own daughter. It was a fearless Kate that confronted him now. The Doctor stood slightly in advance of the others. Close beside him sat Miss Vandervelde, yet holding the pen with which, notwithstanding the disturbance of the moment, she had unflurriedly written her name—in a most decided character. (Like her own.) Her brother, who ought to have been her

sister, his conspicuous mental qualities being most like those which distinguish the majority of the wronged and unenfranchised sex, leant over her chair. To him the entire business was a capital joke. At the end of the table, officially supported by a meek and lowly parish clerk, who busied himself with a sheet of blotting-paper and the parish register, stood the Rev. George Wyke, quietly prepared for the sequel to Mr. Wilson's unceremonious interruption. His warm-hearted esteem for the bridegroom, and his great admiration of the bride, were now quite put away. He was a clergyman. That was his church.

"So," bitterly exclaimed the Squire, as he fiercely surveyed the group, "I am beaten! It was cleverly managed, Doctor Sutton; I give you credit for your adroitness, Miss Vandervelde. You wait now, I suppose, for me to finish the delightful little comedy by making things pleasant all round? But I will disappoint you. There's not one of you, not even the parson, but ought to be ashamed of such a d——"

"Sir," indignantly interrupted Wyke, "recollect where you are."

"I do. That's just it. Outside this building, sir, I'd as lief lay mystick across your shoulders as look at you! It's recollecting where I am that keeps me calm." (Miss Vandervelde smiled. Mr. Wilson's calmness diverted her.) "Yes, you scheming young jade, calm; you may laugh your fill, for the victory is yours. I——"

"Mr. Wilson," observed Wyke—"for I presume I have the honour of addressing the father of Mrs. Sutton,"—the old gentleman winced visibly at this—"whatever has provoked your unseemly violence, permit me to observe that this is no place for airing family quarrels. Had you been present prior

to the commencement of the ceremony, it would have been my duty, as a clergyman, to hearken to what you might have had to say, but now——”

“Now! present!” fairly shrieked the old gentleman, “by Heaven, sir——”

“Hush——”

“I won’t be hushed down. I will speak. You and your fellow-conspirators shan’t enjoy your triumph in silence. If you are not a fool you know quite well that the vilest treachery has been used to prevent my presence. You are a disgrace to your cloth! You——”

“Mr. Wilson, I will not submit to this gross insolence,” began Wyke, getting very red in the face, and feeling most unparsonically disposed to bundle the irate father out of the church.

“You’ll have to submit, though. And you, Doctor Sutton, and that base ingrate whom I am ashamed to call daughter, I——”

“And pray, papa, why should you be ashamed?” asked Kate, leaving the shelter of her husband’s arms and approaching her father. There was a proud ring in her sweet voice, a sparkle of defiance in her steadfast gaze. “Say on, I have a solace for your cruelty and injustice; I can bear it all. Papa, you force me to recriminate. Whose would have been the shame, think you, had you succeeded in selling me to the object of *your* choice.” (Woodridge rather changed colour here. He involuntarily glanced at Sylvia, and discovered that she, just as involuntarily, was glancing at him.) “Do your worst. That which I swore at the altar to-day I will loyally perform; all the ~~was~~ loyally because you cast me off. I have chosen. I do *not* regret the step I have taken; nothing you could say or do would

induce me to regret it." Again she sought the Doctor's arms ; whereupon he, first refreshing himself with a look of unspeakable affection, said—

"Mr. Wilson, you will change your mind."

"Never, so help me——"

"I think you will. However, if you do not, it will be your loss and not ours. My wife—and how proud I am to be able to say she is my wife no words of mine can express !—my little wife might have made a more brilliant match, but I am sure she could not have made a happier one. I am not insensible of the priceless treasure I have won. Let that content you."

"Excellent advice, Mr. Wilson," sententiously observed Miss Vandervelde, "and therefore certain to be despised. So you are angry with poor me? Ah, Mr. Wilson! it is thanks I merit, not rebukes. But gratitude is so very rare, why *should* I complain? Come, Mr. Wilson, be wise; forgive your daughter. You decline. Ah, well! I am not surprised. Kate, my love, since you have dared to tread in your mother's footsteps—for I presume she *did* marry the man of her choice, extraordinary as that may be deemed by some people—your father deliberately discards you; gratuitously torments himself, and clouds the morning of your married life. Mr. Wilson, permit me to say that I am positively ashamed of you."

"Over-indulgence has not decreased your native audacity, Miss!" snappishly retorted Mr. Wilson; "I always thought your father a fool."

"Indeed! you do him honour. My father and you are partners, I believe."

"Ugh!" grunted the old gentleman, turning from Sylvia to the culprits-in-chief, "I am tired of this folly. Doctor Sutton, you may expect a communication from my lawyer, and if your

wife considers she has any business matters to transact with me she will probably instruct yours."

The Doctor bowed; in another instant Mr. Wilson was stamping along the resounding aisle, his hat rammed tightly down on his head, and making as much noise as he conveniently could by way of bearing demonstrative testimony to his unspeakable contempt for the Rev. George Wyke, the Rev. George Wyke's sacred office, his church, and all that was professionally his.

It would of course have been exceedingly unbecoming, not to say disrespectful on the part of Matthew Crisp, had he omitted to wish long life and happiness to the bride and bridegroom over a bumper of the best which the nearest house of entertainment could afford. At any rate *he* thought so, and having successfully accomplished that little affair of the church clock, and thereby plunged the inhabitants of Stokesbro' into a state of unparalleled bewilderment, he straightway betook himself to the nearest house, otherwise the Rifleman's Arms, an edifice which the railway company, inspired by the purest and most patriotic motives, had recently erected. A florid work of art, representing a gigantic gentleman of martial bearing appropriately standing at ease in a Swiss landscape and the chaste uniform of the Stokesbro' volunteers, adorned the exterior of the Rifleman's Arms. His head was surmounted by a scroll of ultramarine, whereon was inscribed—in gold letters—the thrillingly suggestive words—"Defence and not Defiance;" at his feet sprawled another scroll, which informed the inquiring beholder that England should find the Stokesbro' corps each day would do its duty. The manner of the work of art was realistic. In point of rigorous fidelity to nature nothing could have been more admirable than

the grey of the warrior's uniform, unless it was the green of his facings; while his buttons and belt were veritable leather and pipe-clay and brass. In stature (measured in relation to the accessories of the picture, the Stokesbro' man of war stood about eight feet in height) and anatomy, the figure might have done duty for an embellishment of popular fiction so marvellously was it like those well-known Brobdingnagain swells that are beloved of wood engravers and admired by an intelligent public.

Crisp had no taste for high art, neither had the sexton who accompanied him, so with a muttered malison on new houses of entertainment in general, and a dubious snort at the Rifleman's Arms in particular, Mat led the way into a raw-looking apartment, redolent of whitewash and paint, which the railway company had dignified by the title of coffee-room. The sexton could not stop, he said, for he expected *him* every minute; and though that did not matter much, for *he* wasn't everybody, mind, he did not like to be far out o' t' way when *he* cam'. In such serenely independent terms spake the sexton of his revered pastor and master. Crisp gave expression to the regret which he really felt at losing his companion—"it is not canny to sit drinking by yansel,"—intimating his intention of dropping in on the sexton after the second glass, and then, his eye fixed on the church-clock, which was visible from the coffee-room window, deliberately drank the health of Mr. Arthur and his splendid wife in a bumper of the best.

Visible likewise from the coffee-room window was a minor scene or so of the drama then in progress at the church. He rejoiced over the parson's rapid descent upon the sacred edifice—"just in time to save his mense," as Crisp audibly expressed it—and chuckled with huge glee as beheld the

discomfiture of the Squire; but when he saw that hasty old gentleman disappear within the portals of Holy Trinity, he rushed to the door. Whatever the thought or intention which had roused him into action, it was strangled in the birth by the sudden appearance of a portly member of the Stokesbro' volunteers, who at that particular moment bustled fussily along the street in front of the Rifleman's Arms.

"Here, honey, look sharp!" cried he, in excited tones, to the chief handmaiden of the establishment, "whea's that?"

"That?" replied she, in open astonishment, "why Sergeant Cattaws, to be sure; I thought everybody knew him."

"Then thou sees everybody doesn't. Where does he live?"

"Partly at Shipley and partly here, on market-days."

"Ah! just so. Partly at Shipley. I guessed that much. But what's in the wind just now? He seems in a desperate hurry."

"Oh! I know. He's off to the drill-shed, there's——But Missis calls, I must be off. That bill will tell you more about it than I can."

Notwithstanding his burning anxiety to learn the result of Mr. Wilson's interference with the wedding party, Crisp paused to peruse the contents of the bill to which his attention had been drawn. Therein the public were respectfully informed that, on that particular evening, the annual presentation of prizes to the successful shots in the Stokesbro' Volunteer Corps would be made in the drill-shed, on which occasion there would be a variety of entertainments of an athletic character, in which Professor Tweddell, acknowledged by the public press to be the strongest man in the world, would take part. The whole to conclude with a series of sparring matches, open to

the universe, for prizes offered by the said strongest man in the world. M.C. Serjeant Cattaws, S. V. C."

"M. C., S. V. C.," grumbled Crisp, "what do *they* mean? But it doesn't matter, my ancient friend; aw'se be with you if ye had fifty letters to your name!" He had recognised in the gallant sergeant the notorious umpire of the Shipley Eleven.

Crisp reached the church just as Mr Wilson emerged therefrom. The old gentleman was hot enough ("tae have fitten wiv a feather," as Crisp afterwards said) before he descried Matthew: the sudden advent of the Doctor's trusty servitor did not tend to cool his anger.

"What! you are here, are you? How many more of you are there, I should like to know? Out of my way, you crafty old humbug, or it will be worse for *you*!" Saying which Mr. Wilson pursued his wild career.

Crisp prudently pocketed the affront and quietly stepped on one side; but when Mr. Wilson was fairly out of hearing he gave vent to his feelings.

"Gi' thy ways, awd sair head! gi' thy ways! I can remember the day when Timmy Wilson wad na mair ha' dared tee say black was the white o' Mat Crisp's eye than I'd dare tae tell 't judge at 'sizes tae come on. And dinnot thee fancy, awd Tim, that I'd stir a peg if it wasn't for my maister—and his wife. Ha! ha! his wife! That's where thou feels t' spur, Timmy. Things is sairly altered sin' 't awd days. It's Timothy Wilson, Esquire—Esquire!—of Wimpliedale Place, near Heatherthorp, now; it's rowlin' in riches now; it's justice of the peace now; and Mat Crisp—never mind, awd chap! Mebby I'm happier wi' Kelpie yonder and t' mear and Mr. Arthur than he is wi' all his brass. Who knows? He's been done on the post, and he's just mad.—However he cam' tee have such a dowter as

yon puzzles me. I suppose they'll be out directly.—Hollo ! whose carriages are these ? Stand back, you boys ! ”

Kate's courage nearly went with the departure of her father. The inevitable revulsion of feeling was by no means so thorough as might have been anticipated. “Some natural tears she shed,” but sunshine speedily followed the rain, and she brightened into her bonniest. Sylvia was the first to break the silence caused by Mr. Wilson's abrupt departure.

“Now, Doctor Sutton, I presume it is not your wish that we remain here all day ? Let us to breakfast ! ”

“Breakfast, I——”

“Have not given such a trivial matter a moment's consideration. Of course you have not. 'Twas unreasonable of me to expect it. But a wedding without a breakfast ! Whoever heard of such a thing ? ”

“Upon my word, Sylvia, if I had dreamt matters would have taken such a turn as this,” said the Doctor, with a look of distress, “I would——”

“I protest against these excuses. You know very well you would not. But there, I won't plague you any more. Only you know very well, Kate, that something must be done.”

Although Mrs. Sutton hardly saw the dilemma in such a light as it appeared to Miss Vandervelde, she, on her bidding, tried to think, and duly clothed her countenance in gravity. Mr. Wyke was about to be guilty of the solecism of asking the party to the parsonage to breakfast with him, a confirmed bachelor, when Woodridge spoke.

“I agree with Miss Vandervelde, it would be odd were this wedding to lack its breakfast. And I have taken care it shall not.”

“You, Reginald ! ” asked Miss Vandervelde, in frank surprise.

"Even I, Sylvia. Come home with me; my mother is fully prepared to receive you — the carriages are at the door — and I pledge you my word that everything, from the cutting of the cake to the emotion of the speeches, shall be strictly *en règle*."

"Capital, Woodridge! you are a trump!" exclaimed Mr. Albrecht Vandervelde, taking part in the conversation for the first time, and forgetting for the moment that *very* idiomatic English is scarcely appropriate in a church vestry.

Again Sylvia said, "Reginald!" and no more.

"I in some sort owe Miss Wilson—I beg her pardon, Mrs. Sutton—amends for a part I once played in a miserable piece that was chiefly taught me by—her father." Here both his eyes and voice faltered. "I too, like Miss Vandervelde, have been proud to help on this wedding; and to make a long story short, may I, in the name of Mrs. Woodridge, my dear mother, beg the honour of your company to breakfast?"

"Mr. Woodridge, you have proved yourself a generous foe," said Mrs. Sutton.

"Reginald," said Sylvia—and her tone was earnest—"if I were not afraid of making you too conceited, I should say that this is like——"

"What I once was, and in your estimation hope to be again, Syl," whispered he in her ear.

The Doctor could not find words to say what he felt. He grasped Woodridge by the hand. It was a hard grip, and its meaning eloquent.

"You will come with us, Mr. Wyke," said Woodridge, cordially.

"I am sure I shall be delighted, if——"

"No excuses, old fellow," said the Doctor, "you must come." So he went.

Matthew Crisp was in attendance. He opened the carriage doors as though his doing so was part and parcel of a carefully studied arrangement.

The wedding breakfast passed off right joyously. Crisp, who was first made perfectly happy by a pretty compliment bestowed in the presence of the company by Mr. Arthur's beautiful wife, assisted in throwing the old shoes, saw the last of the wedded pair as they were borne away by the express to spend the honeymoon in London, and charged with a note of instructions to the Doctor's assistant, he returned to Heatherthorp.

"She said she hoped I'd tak' care of Kelpic till she returned. Aw'll never leave him after to-day! She's see. What a pair they'll make, to be sure, her and Kelp! Now for a word wi' him, and then back to Stokesbro' by t' next train."

One person in the "crowded and delighted audience" (*vide* local journal) which that night thronged the drill-shed of the Stokesbro' volunteers listened to the laudatory observations of the president with an air of stolid indifference that, it is to be feared, betrayed a lamentable want of faith in the indomitable valour of our British volunteers—huzza our British volunteers. By and by the Professor gracefully took possession of the "roped arena" (as the ornate chroniclers of the Ring of Other days have it) and then Crisp awoke from his apathy. Not that he thought a mighty great deal of many of the Professor's feats of strength and dexterity. He was dubious of the genuineness of some of them; suspected, in his over-wise Yorkshire way, there was more in them than met the eye. Tremendous Tweddell, broadsword in hand, severed the broomstick of domesticity at a single blow; Cœur-de-leonine Tweddell, similarly armed, made mincemeat of a bar of lead; unturbaned and Eastern Tweddell (place of nativity, Hoxton), cleft in twain a happle placed on the

human 'and, ladies and gentlemen, without so much as grazing the skin (of the 'and): nevertheless, Crisp remained imperturbable. But when the Professor put forth his strength to the utmost, and at a blow cut the carcass of a Roseberry Topping tup neatly in twain, Mat joined in the plaudits. There was no mistake about *that*!

Crisp rubbed his sinewy hands together with an appearance of keen relish, and eagerly moved to the edge of his scat, as the Professor, advancing to the front of the stage, begged leave to announce, while thanking his generous patrons from the bottom of his 'art for the overwhelming ovation they had bestowed upon him, that the entertainment would conclude, as stated in the programme, with a series of sparring matches. The combats duly commenced, and according to his wont, Crisp spared not his criticisms. These were occasionally of a sweeping character, and by the time the second conqueror was made happy by the reward of merit—a Britannia metal teapot—the old fellow had attracted the notice of the entire audience.

Again the Professor advanced to the front. He had had considerable experience of sparring, he said, but he could assure them that he had never seen so much science amongst a party of amateurs as he had seen that evening. (The applause at this point was tremendous.) The next set-to, for veterans of not less than fifty years of age, would conclude the entertainment. He hoped—in fact, he was sure—the old 'uns would not be backward in coming forward to show the young 'uns how to handle the leather.—The Professor paused for a practical answer to his appeal, but it came not.—Resuming, he said he felt surprised. After what they had already seen, too! What! would they allow him to return to London like that? The veterans of

Stokesbro' showing the white feather? (No! no!) Where was last year's winner of the prize?

Loud demands for "Sergeant Cattaws! Cattaws! Cattaws!" put a sudden stop to the Professor's insinuating eloquence. Urged thereto by the intoxicating influence of public applause, the gallant sergeant at once joined the Professor, and the Professor patted the gallant sergeant encouragingly on the back.

Said the strongest man in the world—

"Now, my bold veterans! now's the time to show what you are made of. Come where glory waits you! Who'll put on the gloves with the sergeant?"

"ME!" shouted Crisp. He had "fidgeted fu' fain" during the whole of the Professor's address, and it was a relief to his over-burthened soul to speak.

"Brayvo!" exclaimed the Professor. "I knew we should get on at last. We only wanted time. But we must not break the rules. I can't say *I* know this gentleman, but he may be a professional in disguise. Who'll speak for him?"

Crisp's heart sank within him as he mounted the stage. If he were to be disappointed after all!

"I know him to be an amateur," said somebody in the reserved seats. It was Woodridge. Crisp thought—"Well, come; since Mr. Arthur and he are friends, he'll see that I have fair play; and that's all I want." He smiled and nodded his thanks to Reginald, and amid the cheers of the excited spectators, straightway proceeded to equip for the fray.

The old man felt vicious. As he removed his coat and rolled up his sleeves, he, cool as an iceberg, quietly looked over his opponent, and thought to himself, "He's younger, and may be livelier on his pins than me, but he's a bit puffy. I shall beat

him for condition." Crisp chose the smallest and hardest pair of gloves in the Professor's collection—he meant to mark his opponent if he could—and, the finishing touches having been put to his toilet by the attentive Tweddell, the two combatants shook gloves and "sparred for an opening."

"Sergeant Cattaws and a friend," exclaimed the Professor.

Crisp showed a good deal of craft in his mode of manipulation even at the outset. He felt his way. Presently it became evident to his observant eye that the sergeant only wanted encouragement in order to lay himself open to a visitation on that particular portion of the body known as the mark. He forgot not that his adversary was puffy, and—was dead on the mark! He waited and waited with much patience and no show, until the gallant sergeant, actuated by a laudable desire to make short work of the affair, came on and endeavoured to force the fighting. His friends applauded, but they applauded too soon. Crisp fainted once,—twice,—the sergeant greedily swallowed the bait, and the next instant was sent spinning into the Professor's arms by a blow which Crisp had deeply planted upon his most vulnerable part.

Mat grinned as he watched the effect of this broadside, and as the Shipely hero came on again, blowing stentorously, he—the moment appeared so propitious!—could not forbear saying—"How's that, umpire?"

From that moment the battle was won. Sergeant Cattaws, who had hitherto regarded Crisp as a perfect stranger, now remembered him, and—lost his temper. In vain he danced about the roped arena with the view of peppering his ancient assailant all round. Crisp, cool and full of mischief, lost no opportunity of punishing, but he good-naturedly permitted the gallant sergeant to make his own running until the final tussle. Mad-

dened by the titters of the audience and the taunts of his adversary, the gallant sergeant went to work in wildly unscientific earnest. Nothing could have suited Crisp better. His answer was just as earnest, but more grim and direct. He did not fight the wind. The combat ceased to be a sparring match, simply, and became a glove fight. It ended, Crisp having viciously made the most of the smaller and harder gloves, in the ignominious defeat of the gallant Cattaws—bearing upon his countenance sundry ecchymose and sanguineous signs of Crisp's vigorous handiwork.

He had avenged the cricket-match, won a copper kettle, and earned the hearty approbation of Reginald Woodridge. He was happy.

CHAPTER XVI.

NARRATES AS MANY OF THE ADVENTURES OF THE LEADING CHARACTERS AS, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHRONICLER, WERE CONSIDERED SUFFICIENT TO FULFIL THE REQUIREMENTS OF A PENULTIMATE CHAPTER.

WOODRIDGE went his way, and Miss Vandervelde went hers. He to resume the command of a numerous army of the blasters, puddlers, and shinglers of Cleveland ore; she to serenely supersede her indulgent parents in the command of their English home at Saltbrook. Sylvia, thanks to the posthumous gift of a rich aunt, was a richer prize than ever in the matrimonial market, although Woodridge, to do him justice, was unaware of the fact; and in virtue of that peculiar indepen-

dence of character which comes of a satisfactory balance at her bankers (the " glorious independence " praised by the poets is a rare plant indeed), she did pretty much as she pleased. It accorded with her present mood to abide for a brief season at Saltbrook. She was about to spend Christmas in Germany—the home of her youth ; going thither, feeling more quietly happy at heart than she had felt for many a day. Hitherto her enjoyment of life had seemed keen and real enough : but, alas, much of it had been merely seeming ! Now, it had entered the mind of Woodridge after Sylvia and he had seen the Doctor and his bride off by train, to " improve the occasion ; " so without warning note, or preface of any kind, he plunged into an interview with the lady he once jilted, touching a subject that he vowed had become one of life or death to him ! The *tête-a-tête* began boisterously, like the blustering month of the adage ; and terminated—especially on the lady's part—just as gently. Benedick and Beatrice to begin with : almost Romeo and Juliet at the close ! Then they separated.

During the month next ensuing, as Albrecht Vandervelde, now making believe to read for the law, would have expressed it, she suddenly developed an extraordinary interest in the conchology and marine Botany of the Yorkshire coast. Her flaxen-bearded brother could not make it out. He asked Woodridge—who occasionally, not to say frequently accompanied Sylvia in her search after the common objects of the sea shore—if he could make it out ; but Reginald gravely replied that he could not. Then, as a last resource, he applied to the heads of the house of Vandervelde for information, but they were as much in the dark as he. They had their suspicions (at least Mrs. Vandervelde had hers), but——. The truth is, papa and mamma rather feared their imperious-willed

daughter, and that feeling operated in restraining a revelation which would doubtless have astonished Mr. Albrecht Vanderfelde not a little. Unfortunately for the satisfaction of his laudable thirst for information, Albrecht was not curious in fine gold and precious stones, or he might have made something out of a pretty ring of pearls and a turquoise that twinkled upon the fourth finger of her right hand as he—and Woodridge—saw her safely bestowed on board the *Hamburgh* steamer.

“The moon—so called—of honey” beamed with correct serenity upon the Doctor and his bonny bride, albeit ’twas a November orb and a watery. What did it matter? Had they known (which of course they did not) that the fogs that season were denser and browner, more noisome and more numerous than London had gasped its way through for a considerable period, it would have been all the same. London was the Venice of unreality to them! “The moon—so called—of honey” shed its bewitching glamour over the murky, muddy metropolis, and turned it into a city of enchantment.

For a time. Before they returned to London an unwelcome shadow crept over the placid disc, bringing to Kate much uneasiness. They had been about three weeks in London. By the fireside of one of their cosy rooms in Bloomsbury sat she, book in hand, endeavouring with but sorry success to while away the hour before luncheon time, uncheered by the Doctor, who had “just stepped up to Bart’s” to see one of his old friends, and was now unpardonably overdue. He ought to have been back at least half an hour before.

Mrs. Sutton was rapidly outgrowing the bland influences of the moon of honey. She was fretfully impatient. Presently she heard his step on the stair. He entered.

"Oh, Arthur! where *have* you been? You can't imagine how uneasy you have made me by your long absence."

"Can't I though? Let me tell you, Katey darling, that my imagination is singularly powerful. And so you were uneasy? Knowing how incapable I am of taking care of myself, eh? But there! I *am* to blame, I admit it. Hush! not a syllable. Please to sit down here—a little closer—yes, that will do; give me the book; and now, with all convenient speed, prove to your husband and most attentive medical adviser that his provoking neglect has not spoiled your appetite, while I tell you some news."

He spoke the last few words with a gravity that scarcely harmonized with the gay tone of the earlier observations. His wife, forgetting her momentary feeling of annoyance at his inexplicable absence, said, quickly—"News, Arthur; what news?"

"I will tell you. I remained but a short time at Barts. All the fellows there were strangers to me, of course, and old Wilmer is out of town. Very well. I was coming back—but, my dear, you do not eat—it's nothing that need effect your appetite, believe me—direct to you, Kate, when who should I run against but Emsden King, and Dale, Sir Harry's game-keeper. King's a good sort of fellow, my dear, besides being a useful cricketer and a rattling good judge of a horse, so I stopped to have a chat. After the preliminaries—I disposed of the weather and he sent his best respects to Mrs. Doctor Sutton—he said, 'Doctor, I should not mind betting you a monkey to a mouthful of hay that you could not guess in a hundred times what's brought me up from Yorkshire. Naturally, not wishing to entertain the wager, long as the odds were, I replied, 'Sir Harry.' He said, 'No, Doctor; that is

only partly the reason. He gave Dale leave to come, it's true, but, what do you think? It was to buy some hunters for Squire Wilson——"

"For papa!"

"Yes, my dear; what do you think of that? I was as much surprised as yourself. I won't bore you with a repetition of King's exact words, but it is evident from what I got out of him—after a good deal of trouble, dear, for he was only communicative up to a certain point—and I soon saw that he was keeping something back—it is evident, my love, that your esteemed father is about to make a confounded ass of himself."

"Arthur!"

"Listen. Sir Harry Sursingle has taken him in hand—or, rather, Lady Sursingle. That's bad enough; but Lady Sursingle has a sister, who happens to be a widow—*that's worse.*"

"Oh, Arthur, I see it all now! Poor, silly papa! I have met Lady Sursingle's sister, a Mrs. Mountroseberry. They used to call me a Di Vernon, and a Lady Gay Spanker, Arthur, because I occasionally managed to keep up with the Heatherthorp—without grief: but she? I a Lady Spanker indeed? You should see her."

"I know the sort of animal. Riding habit and horse flesh on the brain. A blowzed visage, a manly relish for the substantialities of the breakfast of the season, a pleasing aptness at gulping jumping powder, a martial voice, and the devil-and-all of a will."

"I never saw such a horsewoman, Arthur."

"Oh, I know. Straight as a gun-barrel across country; dodgy as a patriarchal fox in the drawing-room."

"Poor papa!"

"You may say that, my darling. Well, if I am to believe King, your papa is as neatly entangled in her toils as it is possible for him to be, considering the time she has had him in hand. Is she young?"

"The youngest of the family, I believe; how young I cannot say."

"Mr. Wilson has become a subscriber to the Heatherthorp. Emsden King has a commission to purchase him half-a-dozen hunters—think of that, Kate!—and has been dancing attendance at Tattersall's in the old gentleman's behalf ever since he came to town. There is a sale at the Gate to-day, and old King was on his way thither when we met. Oh, he tells me the infatuated old gentleman has been in the Row daily—in charge of the dashing young widow—who has never been known, King says, to conduct herself so soberly in the pigskin since she was born. They are off to Brighton in the course of a few days—I mean the Sursingles—and your papa joins the party. He has heard—and this completes my budget of news—that they are going to have a rare time of it at Wimple-dale Place at Christmas."

Kate sighed and said nothing. She thought of the previous Christmas, and, happy though she was in the love of her husband, who, she fervently vowed, was worth ten thousand foolish fathers, she could scarcely forbear a momentary feeling of regret. She was troubled about the future. Whatever prospect there might have been of a reconciliation had disappeared with the entrance upon the scene of this dreadful widow. It was evident that the Squire, at once pig-headed and persevering, was about to revenge himself on Doctor Sutton, and therefore on his own daughter, by deliberately contracting a second marriage with a crafty adventuress. Mrs. Mountrose-

berry would not fail to take care of herself before she bestowed her name on Timothy Wilson, Esquire ; and Kate felt, " When she is Mrs. Wilson, she will take care of poor *me* into the bargain. Farewell to all expectations. Henceforward I must endeavour to be content with the position of a country doctor's wife." Sutton in a blunt sort of way read what was passing in his wife's mind, but, like a wise man, he spoke not. The trouble that had come upon her—it was scarcely a trouble at all to him—would wear itself out. And then (but this he put into words) who knew? Drawing her to him affectionately, he whispered—" Never mind, darling; who knows what may happen? *We may prevent it yet.*"

" The moon— so —called—of honey " was nearly free from cloud when they once more turned their faces towards Heatherthorp. The " home again " idea was so enchanting, Kate could neither think nor talk of anything else. Her absurdly angry father *might* make a gratuitous martyr of himself, and disinherit her for aught she cared. Was she not going home?

If she yet harboured a doubt of the perfect prudence of her runaway marriage, the first day " at home " to her husband's friends for ever put it to flight. Their spontaneous testimonies to his worth were very different from the meaningless good wishes which in society pass current for friendship's sterling coin. This much for his friends. Several of the poorer sort of his patients, who valiantly ventured on an awkward audience with the Doctor's good lady, were quite emotional in their expressions of esteem. Yet Kate found some of those wedding visits rather trying. For example, Barjona was pleased to consider it incumbent on *him* to call and give her a few words of advice. The disagreement which had occurred between her

husband and himself should—he promised himself—in no wise interfere with his pious intentions. He would certainly see Doctor Sutton, and tell him that he (Barjona) meant to pay Mrs. Sutton a visit.

“We have had our differences, my young friend; but we must ‘forget and forgive,’ ‘thou knows.”

“A sweet and commendable maxim, Mr. Barjona; but I fail to see its present application,” equably replied the Doctor. They had met near the Quaker’s abode, Haleyon Cottage, three days after Sutton’s return to Heatherthorp. “It does not seem to me that I have anything to forget or to forgive either. You were impertinent, Mr. Barjona, and I told you I would not have it.”

“Well, well,” replied the Quaker, in a tone which changed curiously from the testy to the lachrymose, “I am moved to forget and forgive, if thou art not. It was thy wife who——”

“What of her?” asked Arthur, sharply.

“Nothing but well—assuredly nothing but well,” replied the Quaker, with a gentle deprecatory movement of his hands; “thou hast done wisely to enter the matrimonial state. I have been sorely exercised about thee and thine lately; but I trust thy helpmeet will keep thee in the straight path. See to thy goings-out and comings-in; and, above all, prevent thy mingling with those carnal-minded people whose minds are given to what is called sport.”

“Hadn’t you better call, and acquaint Mrs. Sutton with your views?” said the Doctor, smiling, as he shook up the mare and prepared to resume his ride.

“Such was my intention—with thy permission,” quietly replied Barjona. “Wilt thou therefore inform her that she may expect me on third-day morning, at about eleven?”

"The devil she may!" muttered the Doctor, as Barjona entered Halcyon Cottage. "Of all the cool cards I *ever* knew, this member of the Society of Friends is the coolest. Ha; ha! I must prepare Kate for this call. She shall charm him as those Indian jugglers charm snakes. In these days of struggling, when wives who were heiresses are cut off with a shilling it behoves one to look out. Very good, Mr. Nathan Barjona. You shall be received, I promise you. It won't do to lose a patient. Such a constitution as his, and such a splendid determination to spoil it, are not met with every day."

Kate, having her cue, listened to the Quaker's homily with awful seriousness. There was not so much as a twinkle in her hazel eyes to betray her high enjoyment of the joke. She even went the length of promising to do her utmost to restrain the Doctor from participating in the diversions Barjona so sternly denounced. It would be her especial aim, she said, to prevent his ever appearing on a race-course again. Yet she feared she could not promise herself much success.

Barjona was delighted—fooled to the top of his bent. She was not to weary in well-doing, he said. It was wisely given to wives to exercise much influence over their husbands.

He rose to take his departure, and as he did so it occurred to Kate that she might just as well make him uncomfortable as not, by way of punishing him for his meddling.

"Young men are *so* headstrong, Mr. Barjona; but I am sure I shall only be too happy to keep Arthur at home *always*. But he is *so* fond of hunting. And, indeed, when we see instances—you must yourself have known such—of men *much* older than Arthur taking lessons in horsemanship, and actually endangering their lives by following the hounds—we cannot wonder at young men; now can we, Mr. Barjona?"

"No—no—that is—of course, there is something to be said on that point" replied Barjona, getting very red in the face; "but I must be going."

His flight to the door was accompanied by a subdued ripple of merriment. But it is too true that "our sincerest laughter with some pain is fraught." She was yet glowing with the success of her mischievous sally when it suddenly occurred to her that had Barjona been so minded he might have said something exceedingly painful by way of rejoinder.

"Old gentlemen — lessons in horsemanship — following hounds," she muttered. "I might have been thinking of papa. I wonder if that horrid person will succeed in her endeavours to entrap him. I suppose it is wicked to cherish such thoughts, but I *should* like him to be punished a little for his folly—and injustice to poor dear Arthur. If Sylvia were only here!"

Miss Cardmums was absent from Heatherthorp when the happy pair returned home, and so in lieu of paying them a visit she wrote the Doctor a voluminous letter of congratulation, stuffed full of pious quotations and goody poetry.

"Poor dear," said Kate, as she read the epistle. "I don't care what you say, Arthur, I am quite prepared to like her. I am sure she means well."

"Doubtless. But she's a curious old girl. You'll see her often enough, especially if you become her—what does she call it?—'fellow labourer in that cause of Christian philanthropy with which she has for some time been humbly identified.'"

"But that is not all she *says*, Arthur; you forget."

"Do I? Then refresh my memory."

"She ventures to say," continued Kate, laughing, "that if I emulate the goodness to the poor of my accomplished husband—if I——"

"Enough, Kate. Please to remember that Miss Cardmums is a contributor to the poet's corner of the local journal. However, there's no sham about her benevolence, whatever there may be about her poetry."

On the following Saturday that same corner contained thirty stanzas ("from the pen of our accomplished contributor P.C.") on The Nuptials of Two Dear Friends. 'Twas an agonizing effusion, but it did the writer no end of good, was the means of selling at least twenty extra copies of the paper, and afforded a topic of conversation for the back parlour of the Sursingle Arms.

CHAPTER XVII.

SATISFACTORILY CLOSES ACCOUNTS WITH THE HERO AND
HEROINE, AND OTHERWISE WINDS UP THIS MORE OR LESS
"STRANGE EVENTFUL HISTORY."

THE Heatherthorp Hirings, a half-yearly fair for the disposal of agricultural stock and domestic servants, took place about this time. To the ordinary visitor the sights and sounds differed in no remarkable degree from those of previous Hirings. The same fat ladies and living skeletons; the same moving wax-work; the same unlovely members of the P.R.; the same tragedy in ten minutes and pantomime in five, "preceded by a short dance on the outside;" the same noisy chaffering on the town cross where the hiring of agricultural flesh and blood was ratified by means of vigorously bestowed God's pennies; the same daring consumption of strange comestibles; the same

open defiance of the laws of the Total Abstinence Society : in a word, the same Hirings.

Mr. Essom, hard at work shearing the stubbly chins and trimming the unkempt locks of agricultural hirelings, had more business on his hands than he and a diligent assistant could well manage. Nevertheless, when he was bidden to the front shop by Martha Burroughs, he turned over an unfinished chin to his assistant and hastened to obey the call.

"How do you do, Miss Burroughs ? It seems an age since we met. It is not business that has brought you to the Hirings, surely ? "

"Mr. Essom ! If there wasn't a place to be had in the world except by exhibiting oneself on the cross like a Circassian slave, it would not be me would go into service. And"—tossing her head—"it's not for ladies'-maids to come to the Hirings, I should think ! "

"Certainly not, Miss Burroughs ; 'twas one of my jokes, I assure you. Nothing more. But you must have your fairing."

"Mis-ter Essom ! "

"I must insist on it. Old friends, you know. And how do you get on at The Place now Miss Wilson, that is to say Mrs. Sutton, is gone ? "

"Place no more for me, Mr. Essom. Oh ! if you only knew ! Of course when Miss Kate, that's now Mrs. Sutton took it into her head to run off and get married, I could not look to remain there any longer, lady's-maid to never a lady ; but I did expect Mr. Wilson would behave 'andsomely. No, thank you. Only my bare rights. Not a collar, nor a riband, nor a dress ; all packed off—to the surgery ! "

"Well, I must say it was shabby."

"Shabby : it was despicably mean ! Yes, Mr. Essom, despic-

ably mean." And Miss Burroughs repeated the phrase with unction. "But let Squire Wilson look out. Pretty doings at Sursingle Manor and up in London, I am informed. What would you say if Timothy Wilson was to lead Mrs. Mountroseberry to the altar, eh?"

"Say? why that he'd caught a Tartar. So *he's* been smitten with the charms of the Colonel's widow, has *he*?"

"Smitten! he's ravin' mad. He's bought a lot of hunters dresses like a young buck, and dyes his hair."

"That's sufficient, Miss Burroughs; when a man of Timmy Wilson's age takes to dyeing his hair the case looks bad. Why don't he wear a wig?"

"Why, indeed? Well, good morning, Mr. Essom."

"Good morning, Miss. I see I am wanted within."

There was a full meeting of the magistrates of the Riding that afternoon to hear a case of manslaughter arising out of a riot of ironworkers. Upon the bench were of course Sir Harry Sursingle and Mr. Wilson. The Brighton expedition had evidently been abandoned. The entire party, including Mrs. Mountroseberry, had reached Heatherthorp that morning; but as the case was of considerable interest, the ladies were left at Sillery's the while Sir Harry and the Squire took their places on the bench. Mrs. the Colonel's widow, poor gentle creature! was rather unwell after the long journey, and Sir Harry, unknown to the Squire, had advised her to see Sutton. "A deuced clever fellow, Arabella, vastly too good for the kind of practise he gets here. Ought to have a wider scope."

"Sutton!" said Mrs. Mountroseberry, rising from the particularly hard sofa with an air of interest—"was not that the name of the person who ran away with Mr. Wilson's daughter?"

"Name *and* person, Arabella,; the man himself."

"It is not necessary to mention this to Mr. Wilson, Harry ; I will call on Doctor Sutton. You may tell him, if you see him, to expect me at three o'clock."

"Very well, I will tell him. I am sure he will put you right."

Among the witnesses called before the worshipful Bench was Doctor Sutton ; as soon as he got through his evidence—not a word of which was lost on old Wilson, albeit he seemed deeply interested in one of those guides to the administration of the Law which such ornaments of the Bench flirt with in public—Sir Harry beckoned to the magistrates' clerk, and that individual followed the Doctor out of court with a note for him that ran thus : "Sir Harry Sursingle's compliments to Doctor Sutton, and begs to inform him that Mrs. Mountroseberry (Lady Sursingle's sister) purposes calling to consult him at three o'clock this afternoon." The Doctor perused this note and—whistled. "Whew ! The Colonel's widow, by Jove ! what's her game ? Prying ! Mrs. Mount and so forth, I would not fail to be in attendance for a good deal more than my professional fee. Now, shall I tell Kate ?" He pondered. "Yes ; unaided, this woman would get over me ; Kate shall be told at once."

The prospect of inspecting the widow gave a piquancy to the Doctor's lunch which it would not otherwise have possessed. Mrs. Sutton especially was in ecstasies.

"But suppose," said the Doctor, "that presuming on our ignorance of her manœuvres she should, trading on her acquaintance with your papa, ask to see you—with a view to patching up a reconciliation ?"

"Yes ?"

"Would you see her ?"

"To be sure, Arthur. Should be delighted."

"Now that's brave ! Very well ; I think she *will* want to.

you see, my dear; so take my advice and look your loveliest, Overpower her, my darling ! ”

The Colonel's widow called, and the Doctor duly received her. Hers was a case of megrims, and gravely disposing of it, he proceeded to engage his patient in conversation. Now when a handsome, generous-natured young Englishman like our hero strives to make himself agreeable to a lady, there is no politeness in the world so potent. It puts the elaborate courtesies of the stately Spaniard, the fussy Frenchman, and the supple Greek quite out of court. The Doctor strove and the widow was charmed. 'Twas an overwhelming sort of widow, with her adequate development of cheek-bone, her high action, and conspicuous eyebrows—a dashing widow and a loud. Nevertheless the Doctor's manner tamed her into gentleness, and she who had gone to pry remained to smile and talk mincingly like a girl in her 'teens.

“ And Mrs. Sutton, Doctor? I trust she is quite well,” said the widow, with emotion.

“ Perfectly well, I thank you. Mrs. Mountroseberry, I——”

(“ Oh ! I beg your pardon, Arthur ; I thought you were alone,” said Kate at this juncture, making believe to have opened the door by accident.)

“ Don't go away, Kate ; this is Mrs. Mountroseberry—Mrs. Sutton.”

Charmingly, perfectly affable was the obeisance on the part of both the ladies, almost touching in its sweetness. They beamed on each other with a lustrous cordiality that boded danger. The Doctor, who was rapidly advancing in his knowledge of the ways of women, mentally marked the prospects of immediate hostility, and therefore preserved a highly discreet dumbness. Although he was positive his patient was lost to him

for ever, he felt resigned. The objectionable widow had widened the breach between Kate and her foolish father, and it was satisfactory to know that she was about to be informed of the fact. If an impossible bookmaker had suddenly appeared and offered a shade of odds against Kate, the Doctor would have "shot" him on the spot. The widow, in her softest and most velvety tones, began—

"I am sure it affords me great delight to know Mrs. Sutton; I have already the pleasure of a—an intimacy with Mr. Wilson."

A point for Kate. The widow hesitated.

"I beg your pardon——?"

"Mr. Wilson."

"Papa! Oh! I dare say, madam," rejoined Kate, with quiet bitterness. "Since he alienated himself from his daughter about six weeks since, he has doubtless formed not only intimacies but lasting friendships. Papa is rich."

"I do not understand you, Mrs. Sutton," replied the widow, with heightened voice and colour.

"I regret to hear it; I assure you I never in my life was more anxious to be understood."

"Then I WILL understand you, Mrs. Sutton," rejoined the widow, abandoning *finesse*, and speaking with a metallic distinctness that was very different from the modulated murmur of her talk at the commencement—"and pray understand me."

Kate bowed.

"It would have been a pleasure to me had I succeeded—and I meant to try—in effecting a reconciliation between Mrs. Sutton and——"

"Stop!" almost cried Kate, in a voice that startled the Doctor and at once produced the desired effect on the widow.

Then, in a softer tone but quite as distinctly, she added, "Mrs. Sutton must respectfully beg to decline **any** such intercession." (The slight emphasis which she placed upon the word "such" was not lost on the widow.) Mr. Wilson has behaved with cruel injustice to his daughter, and as Mrs. Mountroseberry appears to know Mr. Wilson so well, perhaps she will inform him what his daughter says. No, Mrs. Mountroseberry," continued Kate, fairly confronting that lady, "I will permit no one to interfere between me and my infatuated papa. Were he sick or in distress he would once more find me the loving child he so unjustly discarded; but poverty is not likely to visit him, and as it is understood he will ere long engage an older and more experienced nurse, I need not contemplate the other contingency. Mrs. Mountroseberry, I wish you good-morning."

Mrs. the Colonel's widow was utterly dumbfounded; but what her tongue failed to express her face did. The *prononcé* visage worked in a manner that spoke ill for the success of the reconciliation to which she had referred. The Doctor noticed this, and when he rejoined his wife (after bestowing on his patient all the elaborate politeness he could in her passage from the consulting-room to the door, she almost choking with vexation) he said—

"Well, Kate, darling, it is all up with your expectations. She will marry him in three months."

"Let her! The nasty horrid creature! Her mediation indeed! I would have died sooner than suffer it."

It was a quiet Christmas at the Doctor's, and, as King had foretold, a rollicking one at The Place, where, according to Mr. Essom, Mrs. Mountroseberry "made strong running for the Wimpledale Stakes." Woodridge and his nother, with Miss Cardnums, the Rev. George Wyke, and Mr. and Mrs.

Robson, spent Christmas Day at the Doctor's. Reginald managed thus to get a good deal of pleasure out of the season. He was due in Germany on New Year's Day, in joyful obedience to an invitation from Miss Vandervelde's German connections.

The winter was very open, and consequently the Heatherthorp, strengthened considerably by the patronage and frequent presence of Squire Wilson—"and party"—had plenty of sport. "Such a brilliant season had not been known for several years," said the local journal. The Squire, whose stud, thanks to Emsden King, was unexceptionable, proved himself anything but a duffer in the field. He had thrown himself into the novel diversion with great determination, and he bade fair ere long to hold his own with the best of them. Crisp, who was graciously permitted to give Kelpie a dusting in one of the runs, bore ready and marvelling testimony to the Squire's pluck and rapidly augmenting ability across country, to the intense disquietude of Mrs. Sutton, who scanned the fixtures and read the reports of the runs in feverish anticipation of an accident. The last run of the season was announced, the meet to take place at Sur-single Manor, and a large field was expected. The moment she saw this she went to her husband, who was in the surgery, and pointing to the paragraph in the paper, said, earnestly—"Arthur, dear, you must go."

"I, my darling—you are crying—why" ?

"Because you must."

"Very well, then, I will; but I should like to know why."

"You must not laugh if I tell you that I have had a pre-sentiment all the season of some harm coming to papa. He is so rash and determined. You are a doctor, you know, and if anything were to happen to him—but you know what I mean. Do go, there's a dear, and keep near silly papa during the run."

"Very good, Katey. It shall be as you say. I have stuck to it rather closely lately, and a day out will be a treat. And—I have an idea—suppose I send for Woodridge? He could look after the widow. What think you?"

"That would be glorious."

"Glorious it shall be, then. Now, not a word, about this to anyone but Crisp."

It was as they had arranged, to the supreme satisfaction of Kate, who felt a load lifted from her heart when she beheld her husband and Reginald trot off towards the Manor.

"They'll take their part, ma'am, I'm thinking," said Crisp, with quiet exultation, when he had put the finishing touches to Kelpie and Blouzelinda, and dispatched the pair on their journey; there'll not be many o' them up yonder 'll ride straighter—not even the Colonel," he added, under his breath. "The Colonel," was the title Crisp had bestowed on Mrs. Mountroseberry. Kate laughed and nodded, and Crisp retired to compare notes with Golightly and Essom.

Family differences are of little account at the covert side, and the Doctor was welcomed by the whole of the brilliant company, save and except the Squire, and "acknowledged" by Mrs. the Colonel's widow by a bow of freezing politeness. Reginald, too, was cordially received. It was a splendid morning for scent, humid and fresh, and as everyone was anxious to begin, Sir Harry Sursingle hastened to meet everybody's views.

"Put 'em in, Will, at the lower corner, and work up wind," said he, to the practical head of affairs, William Calvert, replacing the watch he had just glanced at, and turning his horse gently in the direction of the cover.

"Hoick in, hoick!" screamed Will, as he rammed his old horse up the bank, and through the rotten hedge with a crash,

while the pack, despatched on their mission—with the exception of three couple of young ones, who were a little backward, and Ladybird, who would never draw a yard, but worked for half a dozen when her fox was once found—spread themselves in all directions—like stars from a rocket—around him.

“Keep your eye on the widow, Reginald, and I’ll look after the old gentleman,” said the Doctor. “She’s flushed, poor dear! I was not there, but I’ll take very slight odds she acquitted herself with credit at Sir Harry’s little breakfast.”

“I’ll take care of her, Sutton,” replied Woodridge.

At a central point in the covert where four ridings met, far in advance of the field, sat Sir Harry, one hand resting on the cant-rail of his saddle, his whip and reins gathered in the other, while he, from his sidelong position, cast a keen glance over the four, so that not a leaf stirred without his knowledge. A hound opened with a quick note as if in view. Slightly turning his head, he listened intently, but no other voice confirmed the truth of the challenge. The next instant the first whip appeared, coming at the rate of forty miles an hour, his thong ready gathered in his hand.

“What is it, Bob?”

“Little Em’ly, Sir Harry,” replied he, capping as he half pulled up. “She was steady enough up to Christmas, but has taken to riot like the devil lately. I can’t think what’s come to the bitch.” And drawing in his spurs, away he went to solve the problem. He had nearly reached her, and his rate—“Em’ly, Em’ly! have a care, Em’ly! Ware hare, will ye, Em’ly!” was barely pronounced, ere it was answered by “Tally Ho!” and a scream, not as yet set to music, by Sir Harry, who viewed the fox over a ride, and then shouted “Gently; let her alone;” adding, as his servant once more came within sight, “I

tell you that bitch will get right if you give her rope enough. Now push forward to the old yew-tree at the upper corner, and if our fox heads for Billingham Gimlet, remember your place depends on beating him there, for the earths are open, and he looks like a traveller."

It required a mighty effort of self-denial on the part of the Doctor to forego his inclinations, which instinctively drew him to the front, in order to keep his eye on the Squire. The latter, however, was not to be denied, and with the widow stood up wonderfully, although the country was big and the pace hot. They had been going about ten minutes over grass, with fences formidable enough to satisfy the veriest glutton. There was plenty of "grief," but wonderful to relate, the Squire had not had a share of it. In the absence of the Doctor and Reginald, he might have finished the run with whole bones; but catching sight of them, and savagely resolved they should not witness his discomfiture, he boldly charged a blackthorn hedge that had a swollen beck on the take-off side. 'Twas a risk to have made the oldest hand hesitate; but he was desperate, and at it he went. Recent rains had soddened the sides of the beck; the generous mare who bore him blundered heavily on her side, with the rider momentarily underneath. The mare happily recovered her footing; and Squire Wilson, with several ribs broken, had to suffer extraction from his perilous position at the hands of his son-in-law, Doctor Sutton!

Mrs. Mountroseberry, followed patiently by Woodridge, had attempted an easier task higher up the field. Easier, but nevertheless, perplexing. She reached the other side, but ere she did nearly suffered the fate of Absalom, owing to the intervention of what an Elizabethan poet would have called "an envious thorn." It was a dashing widow at Sir Harry's board;

a forlorn and considerably disarranged widow when Woodridge cantered up and peeped at her from the side of the beck. She had lost her hair! The admiration and daily care of her lady's maid hung high and dry in the branches of the thorn, while she, poor dear, reclined, anything but high and dry, on the other side of the hedge, bemoaning her manifold contusions and overwhelming disgrace. Unseen of the widow—who really felt too wretched to take note of anything—Woodridge deftly detached the ravished locks and bestowed them in his pocket; and then, assuring himself that her injuries were not of a serious nature, basely left her to her fate.

We have no further concern in the run. Other chronicles of Heatherthorp would tell you, if you inquired, that it was the most magnificent of the season, albeit, it included the breaking up of a vixen, and not “the traveller” that was originally viewed.

Behold the Squire tended by his daughter—at the Doctor's—rapidly approaching convalescence. You guess that they were tearfully reconciled to each other, and that he discovered Kate's husband to be one of the bravest and cleverest fellows in the world. Behold—not the dashing widow helping Kate in the nursing. She never recovered the effects of the run. Had she called, Mrs. Sutton would have received her with scrupulous politeness, and—presented her with a parcel.

She did *not* call.

The last time we heard of the Squire, he, hale and hearty, was amusing himself with the redecoration of Wimpledale Place, with a view to the reception of Mr. and Mrs. Woodridge (*née* Sylvia Vandervelde), who with Mr. and Mrs. Sutton (and little Arthur) were about to honour him with a long visit.

Crisp, Kelpic, and the widow were enjoying the best of

health ; and the first-named had signed articles to take part in a grand match at cricket against the veterans of Shipley Crisp was in joyful expectation of being pitted against “that Shipley Umpire.”

THE JACKET OF THE EARL.

CHAPTER I.

THE DOWN TRAIN.

“ DOES this ’ere train stop at Carlton Moffat ? ”

“ That depends.”

“ Depends—on what ? ”

“ On the number of passengers.”

“ Well, you are an obliging company. I don’t think ! Here am I due at Carlton Moffat to-night on important business, and you condemn me to stop in town till the morning, unless I find——’

“ Three more——”

“ Three more travellers to join me. But I *must* go to night. Do you hear that ? ”

“ I am not deaf ! ”

“ And since it does not quite run to a special train, suppose you book four places and allow me the privilege of paying for the lot ? ”

“ It cannot be done, sir. The company’s regulations state that, unless at least four passengers are booked, the train can-

not stop. I am here to enforce those regulations. I cannot accept you as the representative of four passengers, so just be good enough to allow someone else to approach the window. You can come back and try again in the course of ten minutes—if you like.”

The applicant, a middle-aged gentleman of groom-like exterior, upon whose smooth-shaven visage the name Newmarket was plainly inscribed, grumblingly retired to solace himself in the refreshment-room with a mixed beverage of an effervescing character, and a corpulent cigar.

Fortunately for the peace of mind of the thus far disappointed traveller, this happened to be a day on which the down train condescended to stop at the well-known racing town. He had scarcely disappeared from the view of the curt official when that person was requested to supply—

“One first and two second returns — Carlton Moffat — please.”

“Certainly, sir. Here boy, run after that gentleman and tell him the train stops at Carlton to-night.”

The second applicant wore a livery, and looked like a valet. On leaving the booking-office window he was joined by a mite of a man in tight trousers, and a gigantic ulster, and the pair rushed with ostentatious zeal to a first-class carriage that was labelled “engaged,” a compartment of which had already been made comfortable with a fine specimen of priceless peltry, and a selection of periodical literature. The renter of the compartment stood outside smoking a cigarette.

“My lord,” began the purchaser of the tickets, “I——”

“Edwards, you are an ass! did I not tell you before we left Pall Mall, that I particularly wished you and Kit to drop all that sort of thing for the present? Now, don’t let me have to

“speak to you on the subject again. Until we return to town I am Mr. Clifton, d’ye hear?”

“I beg your——”

The attempt of the menial addressed as Edwards to strangle a “lordship” at its birth was so ludicrous as to raise a smile on the handsome face of his master, who said—

“I see it is no use grumbling. You are incorrigible. But I do wish you would make the attempt, Edwards. Take a leaf out of Kit’s book. He is prudence itself.”

“I will do my very best, Mr. Clifton.”

“There now! It comes naturally enough. Give me my ticket, and recollect, both of you, that we three are on a kind of secret expedition, the success of which—of the greatest importance to me—you can promote by observing a discreet silence. Listen as hard as you please; don’t blab.”

Edwards bowed and withdrew. The slight, but resolute-looking young gentleman whom he had addressed as “my lord,” lounged into the cosiest corner of the only first-class through carriage to Carlton Moffat. Edwards and Kit took their places, the guard gave the final re-assuring signal, and with the usual shriek, the train started.

The interview of the two servants with their temporarily irate master had not passed unobserved, albeit not a word that was uttered had reached the ears of any of the beholders. The stably person, who had expressed himself in severe terms in reference to the company’s arrangements, and whose destination was also Carlton Moffat, had been a decidedly interested spectator of the *rencontre*. Edwards and Kit had no sooner taken their seats than he took his in the same carriage, of which the three were the sole occupants.

“You don’t object to smoking, I hope,” said he, addressing

himself especially to the light-weight with effusive cordiality. "But there, I am sure you don't. I am not so sure about our friend though."

There was an air of severe respectability about Edwards that smacked of the church. He, however, assured his interlocutor that he was himself rather partial to the odour of a superior cigar, while Kit declared with cheerful bluntness that he might smoke till he was black in the face for anything he cared. Kit and the stranger had eyed each other with great attention. On the termination of the scrutiny, which was conducted with the greatest good humour on both sides, they felt they had obtained each other's measure to a hair. Said the stranger with air of seductive civility—

"Come, now, that is what I call proper. We shall get on like a house a-fire, as the sayin' is. I suppose that you, like me, are bound for Carlton?"

They nodded.

"That tall 'ansome gent was your guv'nor, I presooome?"

Another nod.

"He's a thoroughbred un. Anybody can see that. One of our British aristocracy, *I* should say."

A simultaneous shake of the head on the part of the taciturn pair disclaimed, on their master's account, the flattering impeachment.

"No?" exclaimed the querist, "why, you do surprise me! I would have backed myself to pick out the right sort anywhere. Not a toff! I'd ha' laid a pound to a shillin' on it. And you—wherever in the wide world have we met?" This question was aimed point blank at Kit.

"Can't say. P'raps in Japan."

"Never was there."

"California?"

"Bless you, no!"

"East or West Injies?"

"No, my little eight stun ten, in hold England! The land of the brave and the free. The shrine of each patriarch's devotion, my boy!"

"Considerin' I was carried out of the land of the brave and the free in a clothes basket, at the tender age of three weeks and two days, and rememberin' that I only came back to this shrine of your particular pal's devotion last Monday was a fortnight you are either the biggest wonder in the world or a particler friend of the family."

The only reply which the by this time effectually snubbed stranger vouchsafed to Kit's elaborate rebuff was a look that expressed a good deal, and the emission of a cloud of smoke of unusual density. Half an hour devoted to fitful slumber, and ten minutes to experiments of a toxicological nature at Swindleham Junction, brought the trio together again, and for the rest of the journey the stranger proved very good company indeed. He apparently knew every rood of the country in the immediate neighbourhood of Carlton Moffat.

"You can't see it well now the sun's gone down, but that's old Fothergill's place. He's got the best strain of greyhounds and game fowl in the country. Ah! there it is. The Nest. And yonder's the stables. You have heard of Cutts, the trainer? Yes, of course you have. I should like to meet with a swell as hasn't. Well, that's his drum, and the lads there do say that it's a pieter of cleanliness and comfort. He's precious hard on them tho' if they don't go square. He thrashed one within an inch of his life the other day, and sent him about his business for blowing."

The mysterious beverages that are dispensed by the more or less artificial enchantresses at Swindleham Junction had loosened the stranger's tongue. It was not necessary for either Edwards or Kit to make a single remark.

"There used to be great doings here in the old Earl's days. Not him that's just dead. He was a psalm-singer. You know the sort of cove I mean. Went up to Exeter Hall every May, like a reg'lar heathen, instead of going like a Christian to Epsom. I mean *the* Earl. They trained winners of Derbies here then—and Legers—and won heaps o' cups. And right well the tenants knew it! To say nothin' of the parson and the workus. None on 'em was forgotten. I wonder whether the young Earl—him that's been abroad so long—does throw back to the old man as the papers say he does?—We shall see."

As if suddenly bethinking himself, the stranger uttered those last words with an air of constraint. Taking from an inside pocket a book which was bulky with loose papers, he withdrew one of these, and proceeded to study it with great attention. Edwards relapsed into slumber, but Kit watched the stranger's movements with the relish of an entomologist who has chanced upon a new species of spider. The stranger made some clumsy notes with the stump of a pencil in his plethoric pocket-book, and then carefully returned the latter to its place. That done, he drew a long breath of relief, and rising, looked out of the carriage window.

"Just so," he remarked. "We have lost sight of The Nest. It will be more'n half-an-hour afore we reach Carlton. The old Earl wouldn't stand no railways on *his* land, and we have to go round to get to the town."

As the observations did not appear to require a reply from

Kit, that observant creature remained dumb. Saying nothing was easy to him—and he remembered his master's injunctions.

“Carlt’nfat!” exclaimed the solitary porter as the train groaned its way into the station. His chief was waiting, lantern in hand, to do honour to the passengers. He was not alone. A ruddy, dapper little man in a low-crowned hat, stood by his side, as the train pulled up, and duly accompanied him to the door of the second-class carriage, which accommodated Kit, Edwards, and the stranger. The sight of our garrulous friend acted like a charm on Joe Cutts (for it was no other than that astute trainer of thoroughbreds); relinquishing, on the instant, his intention to speak to Edwards, he retired into the sombre background, and before the station-master was aware of his withdrawal, had disappeared in the dark beyond.

CHAPTER II.

AT THE BILLINGHAM ARMS.

IN accordance with previous arrangement Edwards and Kit were to stop in the station while their master proceeded on foot to the town. He was annoyed at Cutts's absence, and in the few words which he exchanged with his servants they were made aware of his chagrin. Neither of them had seen the trainer. Now their companion from town had. But he was gone. He, too, had disappeared with incomprehensible celerity, and as the station-master was under the natural impression that the trainer's “expected friends” (Cutts's own expression) had not arrived, there remained to his lordship no other alternative but

to banish conjecture and await at the Billingham Arms intelligence of Mr. Cutts's whereabouts.

"You remember your orders, Edwards?"

"Yes, sir."

"I shall see you in the morning, Kit?"

That diminutive horseman returned a respectful affirmative, and his lordship set off towards Carlton Moffat's one first-class hostelry. A quarter of an hour subsequently he is listening to the slow and sage observations of rotund Reuben Sorrel, the comfortable landlord of the Billingham Arms.

"I received your note, my lord—I beg your pardon—Mr. Clifton, and you will find, I think, that I have carried out your instructions to the syllable. Except my wife, who is discretion itself, and Pickles, the ostler, who has had the office, there is not a soul about the place knows you. And what is more, your presence in Moffat will not attract any attention worth speaking of. Lots of strangers come here all through the season to have a look at Joe's string. Anyhow, you will not be spotted. If I may say so, my lord, I mean sir, you were only a bit of a yearling when you were at the old place afore."

The scene of the interview is the best room of the Billingham Arms. The walls are adorned with portraits, by Herring, of the old Earl of Billingham's equine heroes.

Upon a snowy table-cloth at a comfortable distance from a fire that is now at its reddest maturity, covers have been laid for two.

"I knew I could rely implicitly on you," replied the young gentleman addressed as Mr. Clifton. "I have strong reasons for this temporary concealment of my identity, as you may conjecture. But where is Cutts? He was to have met me at the station."

"He went to the station, my lord—I beg pardon, Mr.——"

"Oh! never mind. If it comes easier, and I suppose it does, abandon my *alias* while we are together. You were saying ——"

"That Cutts went to the station. You may depend upon it that he had *his* reasons for not showing, just as you have yours, my lord, for not wishing just yet to be known as the Earl of Billingham. But he may be waiting in my little snugery even now. Shall I send him up?"

"Do, Sorrel—and see that we are not interrupted."

The landlord bowed and withdrew. Presently he returned, and ushered in the trainer, who waited until his introducer had left the room, and then calmly locked the door.

"Excuse me, my lord, but they are remarkably fond of a fifty-to-one chance in this house—I know 'em of old—and there is such a thing as spoiling a market."

"Why, you do not believe that they would listen to our conversation, do you?"

"Listen! Lor' bless you! Why old Pickles would risk half an hour in that chimney, reek and all, to get hold of a good thing. And Reuben, for all his velvet face and meek manners, is pretty handy at a keyhole. Bnt, hark you, my lord, do you know who came down in the same train with you?"

"Haven't the least idea, Cutts, I assure you. I saw nobody get out except Edwards and the Shrimp."

"Well then, I did. That was why I cleared out. The man who rode from town in the same compartment as your people—of course they were not to be squeezed, I know that—was no less a professor of the art of obtaining useful sporting knowledge than Winchester Harry, the dearest tout in Great Britain."

"But why? he cannot know me—he has no idea—he——"

"Read that, my lord."

Lord Billingham took the rather thumbed copy of the latest edition of *The Spur*, which his trainer handed him, and read aloud the paragraph to which his attention had been directed, which example of exclusive intelligence was couched in these terms :—

"Our Special Club Gossip informs us that a certain youthful nobleman, who has recently come into his title, and all thereunto belonging, as the lawyers phrase it, is about to revive the glories of a once-famous training establishment, with which his illustrious grandsire was, for many years, intimately connected. It was the original intention of his lordship (who, by the way, has spent the past few years of his life abroad) to gradually get together a stud, and try his best with it, in a small way, next season, but a circumstance which occurred the other night at a certain well-known club has had the effect of forcing his hand. The play is habitually high at the —— but, on the night in question, it reached an altitude that has seldom been paralleled even in the palmy days of Crockford's. How it came about is immaterial, but towards the close of a rather long night, Lord —— and Major —— found themselves pitted against each other, betting cool monkeys on the turn of the card. The Major was never in it; the youthful peer could not do wrong. Never was seen such marvellous luck! In the end the gallant officer lost his temper, and was provoked into making an observation, which appeared to convey a reflection on his opponent's youth and inexperience. 'It was vain,' he said, with contemptuous hauteur, 'to look for a sportsman's revenge from such a boy!'

"The retort was rapid and neat, reminding the old members

who were present of the grandfather (who had himself been a frequent antagonist of the Major's). 'Then you would have me infer, Major —— that not until I have lost to you as you have lost to me will you grant me my playing certificate? Thank you! But you shall have your revenge. I am informed that your champion is a moral for the Occidental Handicap. The prophets declare that he can fall down and win. There are three others trained in the same stable, which, failing yours, must be there or thereabouts. It is any odds on Simpson's lot. I have won twenty thousand pounds of your money to-night. Now I will bet you that amount even, or forty thou, if you like, that *I* run one in the Occidental which beats yours, or any of Simpson's, all the lot in, wherever they finish.' In justice to the Major, it should be stated that he did not rush at this Quixotic wager. Eventually, however, such was the pertinacity of Lord —— he booked the bet, forty thousand even, that Simpson's lot beat Lord ——'s single representative, the latter to be named by him three days before the race comes off. Our Special Club Gossip adds that the affair has given rise to a good deal of comment in sporting circles, for it is notorious that Lord —— is not the possessor of a single hair in the tail of any thoroughbred in training!"

"Well, my lord, what do you think of that?"

"It matters little what I think of it, Cutts. Every word of it is true."

"Ah! just so. You made that—excuse my saying it—most idiotic bet on the strength of the information contained in my letter."

"I did."

"But, suppose the mare should break down?"

"Oh! she won't do that, you know, Cutts," replied Lord

Billingham with a smile. "I am a favourite of fortune, recollect, and then, after all, what is the form of this champion of theirs, this Fluker?"

"He was a rattling good two-year-old. He did nothing at three, but he belongs to a school that can afford to play a waiting game. Now he is four. He has performed twice. Once at Canterbury and once at a fashionable watering place, called Hayling Island. I said 'performed.'"

"Well, but our mare might have been—"

"Nearer than last but one in the Oaks. I admit it, my lord. But what was the use of being nearer when I knew we could not win? Let us change the subject. You know she has been backed?"

"Yes, confound it, the day after my kick-up with Major Puffin. How was that?"

"I caught one of my lads wiring to Mangold, the bookmaker, who is——"

"Major Puffin's commissioner!"

"Just so," resignedly remarked the trainer, "and, my lord, when I inform you that Winchester Harry is a salaried servant of this same Mr. Mangold, you will guess why I did not meet you at the railway station. Through the lad whom I discharged, he has got wind of this trial, and he means to see it——"

"Yes, and——"

"See it he shall!" exclaimed Cutts, striking the table with emphasis, and making the glass and delft dance again. "To-morrow morning Dolly Mayflower will be at eight to one, for the wretches have got to know I have a good 'un. To-morrow night she shall be driven back to fifties! Don't ask me how. I know all the magistrates about here. There is not a Justice on

the Bench who is not a personal friend of my own. And they are every one on."

"What do you mean, Cutts?" queried Lord Billingham.

"Never mind, my lord. Time will show. Mr. Mangold thinks to come it over me with the aid of this Winchester Harry, does he? Well, you take a shade of odds that he finds his mistake out. As I said before, the magistrates about here are reasonable. Good night, my lord. To morrow morning at four. I will see that you are called in time, and I have taken care that Mr. Mangold's agent shall not miss our meeting."

"Well, good night, Cutts. You won't take anything before you go?"

"No, thank you, my lord. I must see the mare before I go to bed, and I have some instructions for the Shrimp?"

They shook hands cordially, and separated.

About this period sagacious Henry of Winchester was assisting in a grave consultation with the discharged stable boy, a youth of perverted intelligence, who, incensed at the treatment he had received at the hands of his righteously indignant master, was doing his very utmost, as he ornamentally expressed it, to "queer their game."

"You had better hide in the hollow near the five-furlong post. I know they will be tried on the racecourse, and then you can see 'em both ways. You can't mistake the mare; she is a bright bay, with a white stocking."

"All right, Duster, I shan't forget. Will you turn up?"

"Not me. Why if he was to catch me near his place again he would skin me alive. But you can do without me. The telegraph office is at the railway station."

Henry of Winchester enjoined his landlady to call him next morning at a quarter before four.

CHAPTER III.

"THE TRIAL."

THE grey of the following morning saw every participator in the momentous trial, biped and quadruped, ready for action at the appointed hour. After each had imbibed a tumbler of rum-and-milk, recommended by the trainer as a preventive of the ills to which those who inhale the misty morning air of the downs are liable, he said: "There is not a minute to be lost, my lord. You have seen the saddles prepared, and the leads put in, and the clothes weighed. You have sealed them with your own hands. Not that you wished to do it. Oh, *I* know that! But, my lord, we must begin fair and square if you are to have that confidence in me which I am proud to say your grandfather had to the day of his death. After the trial we will return here, and you shall write me a cheque for the mare while I write you a receipt. Then, if the dusting up has turned out as I believe it will, get back to town and back her for pounds, shillings, and pence. But there's the Shrimp and my head lad. And here are our nags?"

"But tell me, Cutts, what do you intend to do with this touting rascal?"

"Henry?" replied the trainer, with a broad grin. "Leave him to me. He shall be made comfortable enough."

"But, I say, look here, Cutts; you must not be tempted into committing a breach of the peace."

"Breach of the——excuse my laughing, my lord. Not for the world! We do not know what a breach of the peace means

in Carlton Moffat. And as for our magistrates—they don't know what it means either. Ho! ho! Breach of the——dear me, no!”

They were the while trotting along in the track of three sheeted thoroughbreds, one of which answered perfectly to the description of Dolly Mayflower, the mysterious flyer Winchester Harry had journeyed from town to run the rule over. Supplied by his quondam companion, the discharged stable-lad, with accurate descriptions of the tackle with which Dolly Mayflower was about to be tried, he experienced no difficulty in picking out two old acquaintances. Of course the reader already guesses that the clear-eyed tout is already in ambush. He is familiar with the ground, and has chosen a point of observation which commands an excellent view of the mile-and-a-half stretch from end to end. He has been there for the last hour, and Cutts is aware of it, but for the present he keeps his knowledge to himself. As the five actors in the forthcoming trial pass the hidden watcher, Cutts and the head lad exchange a glance, which—well, it would not have added to the comfort of Henry of Winchester, if he had seen it. But nothing that crosses his vision gives him cause for apprehension. He is so perfectly satisfied with the success of his arrangements for reconnoitring, and his security from observation, that he lights his pipe and indulges in a chuckling soliloquy.

“Ah! that chestnut is the colt he told me about. Of course they'll make runnin' with him. He is a fair demon at six furlongs. Then, that's old Slyboots. Many's the Queen's Plate he's pulled off. The old beggar can stay as long as a lady in a milliner's shop. I wish Cutts 'd speak louder; with the wind this way, I might hear somethin' about the weights.”

As if to favour the eager auditor Cutts *did* raise his voice,

and the words which he uttered threw Winchester Harry into a perfect fever of excitement.

"I calculate, my lord, taking the line through Slyboots—he had the measure of the Major's lot last week—that we have at least a stun' in hand. If she wins this trial it will be like puttin' in Lightning-Conductor at five stun' twelve."

"Of course I am delighted to hear it, Cutts, only I would not speak so loudly if I were you; we may be watched."

"Not we!—only let me catch anybody staggering us on these downs! I'd warm him, give him such a dose as I gave a tout they call Winchester Harry in Blazaway's year. I'll take slight odds he never forgot it."

"Cutts, you butcher," groaned the martyr referred to, "you are right. I have not forgotten it—and never shall. I wish to goodness I was well out of this. It is not half good enough."

Meantime the three horses cantered down to "the post." Lord Billingham and his trainer, taking an elevated position opposite a point that represented "the distance," awaited in silence the answer which Dolly Mayflower would give to the important question which her two adversaries would presently put.

"They are off!" exclaimed Lord Billingham and the trainer in a breath, the latter adding, immediately afterwards, "and she is pulling the Shrimp out of the saddle. No——it's all right. That lad rides well, my lord. The young 'un cuts out the work, but I'll be hanged if the mare has not the foot of him! *Now* for it, my lad; come on, come on, and catch up Slyboots!"

"He's done it, go on—there now, what do you think of that, my lord? She's won with the weight of a hatful of ha'pence in hand, hard held. Just as she'll win on the day!"

“ I hope so, I am sure, Cutts, and now we must lose no time before completing our business.”

“ Pardon me, my lord, there is not the least necessity to hurry. All that’s in good time. Now, if you don’t mind lending me a hand here—we can walk up to the Nest—I want Mather, that’s my head lad, and the Shrimp, to transact a bit of business on my account.”

With these words he dismounted, Lord Billingham in silent surprise following his example. The Shrimp and Mather respectively descended from the saddles of Dolly Mayflower and Slyboots and proceeded with curious alacrity to replace the horses’ clothing, in which operation they were aided by Cutts, and then, as though their hurrying was a matter of life and death, they severally leapt into the saddles which, the moment previously, Lord Billingham and Cutts had vacated.

“ What *does* this mean ? ” queried his lordship, in a tone of impatience.

“ Pardon me, my lord ; all in good time.” Then turning to the head lad, he said, “ You know, Mather. He has left his form by this, but you can head him off behind the furzes and run into him by the rubbing-house.”

“ All right, sir,” and off they galloped.

“ Now, Cutts, I insist on knowing the meaning of this ! ”

“ Presently, my lord, presently. Here, Smith, lead the mare home, and I’ll follow with the colt.”

“ Lord Billingham, this is my domain, and, like the man in the poem, ‘ my right there is none to dispute.’ This trial has been touted.”

“ Touted ! ”

“ Yes, touted, but I think by this time the artist who did the work very possibly wishes he had never clapped eyes on the

performance. Your man, and if you please (after you, my lord), my jockey, Shrimp, saw the tout last night, studying with great attention a telegraph key—you know, an arrangement for wiring news in cypher. I saw him this morning taking stock of us. So did Shrimp. And so did Mather. He is now on his way to the telegraph-office, which establishment he will not reach for the next twenty-four hours, or I'm very much mistaken. By the time we have had some breakfast, Mather will be at the house with that key——"

"But, Cutts, I really cannot lend myself——"

"I repeat, my lord, that *I* am king here. I do not say it offensively, but you will recollect that Dolly Mayflower has not yet passed out of my hands."

Lord Billingham made no reply. Cutts, whose manner grew warmer as he went on, said—

"I am determined to be even with the lot of them. The man who works the Major's commissions, this Winchester Harry's first master, I found the other day had been tampering with one of my lads. Him I sent about his business, with what a Scotchman would term 'a sackful o' sair baines.' I have to reckon with his master now."

"Cutts," said the Earl, "I wash my hands of the whole affair, if I cannot win my wager fair and square."

"You can—and shall, my lord, only at the same time let me win mine. I have sworn to break the wretches, and break them I will!"

And how fared it with the emissary the while. With never a longing, lingering, look behind, he turned his face in the direction of Carlton Moffat. It was half-past six o'clock. At eight the telegraph-office would be open; at nine there was a fast train to town. Nothing could be better.

Meanwhile, he would refresh his memory with a glance at that key.

But hark ! a sudden, yelping, panting sound,
So terrible [to him] his heart stands still with fear.

And he is brought up short by a couple of daylight highwaymen, who wear the aspect of jockeys in undress, and who are mounted upon diminutive steeds of remarkable swiftness. He recognises in the Shrimp one of his railway companions of the night before, in Mather a person of trust in the employment of Cutts, the trainer. He takes in the situation at a glance, and is resolved to show fight. The jockeys dismount, to the grim satisfaction of the watcher, who is clearly their match, one down and the other come on, without the ponies.

"Get out of the way. You can't cop me for trespassin'. Take out a summons."

"Get on with you ! We on'y want you to stop, and dine along of us. Me and my pal here. I have told him what a proper sort o' chap you are, and he wants to know you."

"Go out of the way, or I'll——!"

"No you won't," replied Mather. By this time, thoroughly exasperated, the watcher of thoroughbreds made a rush at the taller of his assailants, but, ere he reached any part of his person, his wild career was stopped by the interposition of the right foot of the Shrimp, and he paused for breath with his abraded nose in the centre of a forest of furze. On regaining his feet, he found himself confronted by half-a-dozen stable boys, who thereupon seized and hurried him into a rude tenement, erewhile devoted to the rubbing-down of perspiring thoroughbreds, and placed him in a sitting posture in the centre of the floor.

"Now," said the Shrimp, who constituted himself the spokesman of the malcontents, "make yourself comfortable, and while

they're a-brilin' the kidneys and rashers, and laying the eggs for your breakfast, give us a song. The beauty you warbled last night, you know—this, I mean," and, dexterously plunging his hand into the recesses of the prisoner's breast-pocket, the Shrimp produced the key.

"Give it me back," roared Harry. "You shall smart for this. It's a robbery."

"No it's a loan, that's all. Don't be alarmed, it shall be repaid, with interest. Here, Mather, don't be a fortnight afore you get it by heart. He might want it."

Mather, with a satisfied grin, received the portentous document and vanished—leaving the horse-watcher with his persecutors.



Through a fragrant veil produced by the smoke of an incomparable cigar, the Earl of Billingham complacently peruses the document which constitutes him the owner of Dolly Mayflower. The morning sun streaming in through a window that is adorned with the last roses of summer, give a kind of saintly aspect to the puzzled head of Cotts, the trainer, who, pen in hand, is intently endeavouring to make use of Winchester Harry's cabalistic key.

"Ah! the address and signature are already written. That is well. Now for the message; 'Trial came off,' nm—*rule of three*; Dolly Mayflower—*carrots and turnips*, nm; 'beaten to blazes, nm—*omnibus*, nm; 'by Slyboots,' nm—*Moody and Sankey*. 'Very bad goods, and not to be touched at any price,' —*Bank of Elegance*."

In one hour from that the Earl of Billingham was on his way to town, and the following message from Henry Whittle, Carlton

Moffat, to Seth Mangold, Imperial Club, Boswell Court, was on the wires :—*Rule of three dolly mayflower carrots and turnips omnibus moody and sankey bank of elegance.*

When the clubs closed it was found that, notwithstanding the demonstration which had been made against her, Dolly Mayflower had been backed in one hand to win a mint of money and that at the knocked-out price of thirty-three to one.

CHAPTER IV.

THE OCCIDENTAL HANDICAP.

IT was well on in the Monday afternoon succeeding the memorable Saturday which had witnessed the tout's violent detention by Cutts' boys, that Winchester Harry, looking the picture of mental misery, turned up at Tattersall's, and recounted his woes to his horror-stricken employer.

"Do you mean to say that the message which I got at the club was a barney?" queried Mr. Mangold, in a voice that sounded like a strangled shriek.

"Every word."

"Then the mare won?"

"In a walk. I suppose you gave her a peppering?"

"Peppering is no name for it! And the Major—I would not meet him at this moment for any money. But, stop. There has been very little doing to-day. Mivens, their commissioner, has not been here. I suppose they waited until I knocked the mare clean out on Saturday before they began to operate. Hollo! there *is* Mivens coming away. I'll draw him."

"Want to back Dolly Mayflower, Mivens?" he asked of the new-comer, in a tone of constrained joviality.

"Yes I do. Will you lay?"

"Can't. Laid all my book, and a bit over, on Saturday."

"So I heard. Ah! well, it doesn't matter very much. I did without you."

"What do you mean by did without me?"

"Why, I waited this afternoon until you cleared out, and then I commenced proceedings. I rather fancied that your friend there," he continued with a sly smile—"might return from Carlton Moffat about this time and tell you the news; and as I feared it might get wind and spoil the market, I have helped myself to all the thirties, twenty-fives, twenties, and hundreds to seven I could get; and now, my fly friend, if you feel any desire to back Dolly Mayflower back again, just to make that volume of yours rather pleasanter reading than it is just now, you will have to be precious quick, or you won't get ten to one."

With a remark that would have been rude if rage had not made it inarticulate, the outwitted commissioner rushed from the presence of his Job's comforter, only to find from the lips of the now rapidly-retreating members abundant confirmation of his worst fears. *Now* Lord Billingham's mad bet looked, as Mr. Mangold mentally put it, "very good business indeed." Nothing in his extensive experience of the Turf had appeared more insane than the young peer's bet with the Major; to back one for even money against a stable, and such a dangerous customer as the favourite, Fluker, *in* the stable: the thing was too absurd. Yes, *was*. It is very different now, he ruefully thinks. According to the watcher's too graphic description of the trial their lot had no chance whatever against Dolly Mayflower

And to think of old hands like the Major and himself having been done by a mere boy! Not that Mr. Mangold failed to credit ingenious Mr. Cutts with his proper share of the transaction. He was aware, of course, that the assault and irregular arrest of his agent, and the annexation, for mystifying purposes, of Henry of Winchester's key to the cypher which they used in their correspondence, was Mr. Cutts's work; but the whole thing he put down to the Earl of Billingham, and the Earl of Billingham's luck. His incensed *employé* had suggested an appeal to the law—if he was trespassing on the downs that was no excuse for their assaulting him, and robbing him of his property—but shrewder Mr. Mangold would not hear of it.

“What! summon Joe Cutts to appear before a Carlton Moffat bench of magistrates. Don't be an ass, Harry. Why there's not a beak amongst them, and I include the parsons, that has not backed Dolly Mayflower before this. A fine chance you would have. Besides do you think it would pay me, or the Major, to have our names dragged through a police court? Let it be. Our turn will come. The race has not come off yet. I have seen bigger certainties than this sick or sorry on the day.”

With which oracular bit of consolation the sulky tout was obliged to content himself. That night Mr. Mangold and his employer had a long and serious conference at the club of the latter. It is not necessary for the purposes of this narrative to intrude on their privacy. They knew their position to be serious, and they were not the men to scruple much as to the means of escape.

Every day brought its report from the training stables from which it was evident that both Dolly Mayflower and Fluker were undergoing a most careful preparation for the Occidental, and both were well. Simpson's second string, Golden Horn,

was quietly backed by the followers of the stable, and on the other hand Cutts's own champion old Parsnip, found adherents willing to accept the tempting price of thirty-three to one. Dolly Mayflower kept her place steadily at the head of the quotations, with Fluker next on the list.

It wanted but three days to the Westchester meeting, when the Earl of Billingham received a letter from his trainer, which ran as follows :—

“ I want you, my lord, to leave the entire management of this business to me. We are not out of the wood yet. They are playing a desperate game, which I am bound to defeat. I shall start old Parsnip to make running for Dolly, and you must let me put up Twiss—I mean the Shrimp—to ride. Norton is at liberty ; he is one of the best jockeys in England, and I have retained him for the mare. Leave everything to me until we meet at the scales.”

This epistle puzzled Lord Billingham not a little. Short a time as he had been connected with the Turf, he had heard enough of Norton and Norton's former dealings with the opposite party to make him uneasy. His trainer could not be ignorant of the jockey's antecedents. Nevertheless, he *did* leave everything to Cutts, and when, on the first day of the meeting, he saw by the papers that Fluker had come with a rush in the market, and his own mare had gone back, he thought, “ Well, if they think they can win, let them back their opinion and welcome,” and he dismissed the matter from his mind. He stood to win an immense stake, besides being on velvet, and he was resolved not to hedge another penny.

The morning came. A card, damp from the printers, was brought to his bedside. He greedily glanced at the programme,

leaped hastily out of bed, and rang the bell with a violence that placed the wire in jeopardy.

"Come in! Send at once for——"

"May *I* come in, my lord?"

"Cutts, you are the very man I wanted. I was just going to send for you. Have you seen this?"

"Yes."

"And you know that——"

"Dolly Mayflower is not coloured. And when you get your morning paper you will find that she has not arrived."

"Not arrived! Now look here, Cutts, I don't understand this."

"My lord, I begged of you to leave everything to me until we met at the scales. I repeat that request."

"Is there anything the matter? Now, then, out with it."

"Yes—and no. There's a good deal the matter, as they'll find to their cost. Don't hedge another penny, my lord; and if they should take any liberties—and it would not surprise me in the least to find Dolly driven back again—have a bit more on. Trust me."

"Cutts, I will; most implicitly."

"Thank you, my lord, you will not regret it."

They shook hands and parted.

While the curious were eagerly scanning the trains which stopped at Westchester, to duly note "the arrivals," at a little station on a branch line, which spread along the other side of the downs, a luggage train was relieved, unseen of watchers of any description, of a van which contained—Dolly Mayflower, and Cutts's head-lad! Meantime, at the scene of action, Fluker had been made favourite. Major Puffin's second string, Golden Horn, backed to win money, and Dolly Mayflower

"sent about her business," notwithstanding the fact, as the reporters afterwards stated, "that her noble owner pluckily came to the rescue of his champion."

The wagering on the great event of the meeting, the Occidental Handicap, waxed fast and furious, as the time fixed for the race approached. The weighing-room was surrounded by owners, trainers, bookmakers, and bookmakers' scouts, who marked their cards as one after another of the field was weighed out.

"Now, Norton, what do you ride?—ah! I see—sage green, pink sleeves, belt, and cap—Dolly Mayflower? Lord Billingham's colours. Glad to see them back again, I'm sure."

"No sir, that is not so. Those are the late Lord Billingham's colours. Norton was engaged to ride for me, and mine is Parsnip—but he does not run. Here is Dolly Mayflower's jockey. Twiss, jump into the scale."

It was Cutts who spoke, addressing the fussy little clerk of the scales. His words not only silenced the hubbub like a charm, but, for the moment, deprived Major Puffin's rubicund countenance of its conspicuous colour. That gallant officer turned on his heel and left the room, accompanied by Mr. Mangold. Lord Billingham, who had hitherto held aloof, now joined Cutts, and silently grasped his hand.

"All right; no, not exactly. Give him a half-pound cloth. That will do. You are fined for not declaring your colours, mind."

"Very good, sir. We shall get over that, I dare say. Now, Shrimp, come on. My lord, I have a hack waiting for you. Come with me, when I have attended to the saddling, and see them start."

It seemed as though there was new meaning in the roar,

"They are off!" which rose from the ring when the flag fell. Lord Billingham levelled his binocular, but all he saw was a blurred blaze of colour; while he heard nothing, until turning his hack's head in the direction of the weighing room—Cutts having left him—the sound of muttered objurgations smote upon his ear. It was the voice of an unhappy backer.

"Can you tell me what's won?" was the question he put to that unsuccessful person.

"No I can't, captain. His colour's not on the card; but I can tell what has *not* won, and that's Fluker."

That night Cutts unburdened his soul.

"Shrimp rode splendidly. Laid off for half the journey, then came through his horses like an artist, and won cleverly by three parts of a length, Fluker second. I am rather partial to reading Shakespcare, my lord, and when the Shrimp told me that the colours you used to run in in India were so much like a pansy—primrose body, purple sleeves and belt, and purple cap—I thought I'd give them one. 'Pansies for thoughts,' you know! They saw the trial, they got at the jockey—as *I meant they should*—and we did 'em. 'Pansies for thoughts!' It will be a long, long time, before they forget THE JACKET OF THE EARL."

A HEAD BEATING.

CHAPTER I.

“**H**OW provoking ! And that party at the Mills’s on Wednesday. Now, *are* you deceiving me, Frank ? Mr. Bevan—the office—has nothing to do with this sudden departure ? ”

“ Not an atom.”

“ What *can* it be, then ? ”

“ My dear Gerty, endeavour to be reasonable—for this once. You ought to know that if I were not rigidly pledged to secrecy you would be the very first in whom I’d confide. Come, darling, do me that justice.”

“ I know nothing of the kind, sir ; and I’m not your darling ; ” (Emotion.) “ But I know why you **refuse** to tell me the contents of that letter.” (Sobs.) “ Don’t trouble to ex— explain. It is from your devoted an—and—atrocious friend, Jack Mas—Masters. And for him you would abandon Me.”

Whereupon, without pausing for the rejoinder that might perchance have appeased her charmingly unreasonable wrath, she disappeared in a shower of sobs.

Her conjecture was shrewd. It *was* my erratic friend, John Masters, Lieutenant in the Woldshire Militia, who had got me into this awkward dilemma. Now a tiff with one’s Own, philoso-

phically viewed in relation to the reconciliation which generally "follows hard upon't," may be almost considered a luxury; but I was in no mood for such luxuries—had no time for enjoying them—just then. Gertrude Clevedon suffered from the family virtue—temper," and, once off with the bit in her mouth it took the deuce and all to get her in hand again.

The worthy old gentleman to whom I was beholden for a good deal besides a patronymic—the head of the well-known firm of Bevan, Simpson, and Bevan, solicitors, Bedford Row—tired outright of my racketsy sporting ways, had latterly been urging me to marry and settle: and, as I was weary of the oft-recurring theme, and had certainly no objection to the *parti* selected, his notions in this important matter came to perfectly accord with mine. She and I had got through what I may call the first chapter of a longish Christmas vacation at Loft-house Grange, in the North Riding, right jollily; her ponderous proser of a papa notwithstanding. There had been parties to keep her amused, and odd days with the Cleveland to give me tone. Yet loth as I was to put a sudden end to my easy holiday, I could not for a moment think of leaving dear old Jack in the lurch.

He was at the Curragh, "studying"—the delightfully unsophisticated family gave out—"hard for promotion." In the eyes of John's father, the youngster's commission was a sternly patriotic fact; but, if some of John's most intimate associates had been requested to give *their* opinions of that amusing slip of parchment, it is not improbable that these would have somewhat differed from the glowing fancies cherished by the wealthiest gentleman-farmer in Wensleydale. Lieutenant Masters himself, let me premise, was, and had been, since the days of birch and impositions, "A young scamp, sir; an

unmitigated young rascal!" *and* one of the most incorrigible practical jokers that ever disturbed the serenity of a pacific household. The child was decidedly father to the man in his case, whereof let the little difficulty out of which he had begged me to help him bear witness. A muff, named Dawkins, who had been subjected to Masters's delicate attentions, had straightway reported the fact to the Colonel, who, a martinet of the strictest type, had forbidden my friend to leave his quarters—"Until," wrote he in one of his amusing epistles (not that whose contents had piqued the curiosity of Gertrude, by the way) "old Tanks satisfies himself that there is sufficient ground for a Court-martial: and he'll precious soon do that. All owing to a miserable humbug like Dawkins. But it was impossible to resist it you know, dear boy. Cherton (you have met him), and I went round to the mollycoddle's hut one night after mess, nowise unwilling for a lark; this I admit. He was absent. Unfortunately for the sequel, that did not matter in the least. There was a pair of gloves—white and meek and nice as his own smug self—stretched upon a tree, ready for exhibition on the morrow's parade. Well, I polished them with a rather powerful solution of Day and Martin. That was all, I assure you. While I was getting up the raiment it pleased old Cherton—who walks a trifle over fifteen stuns, you know—to recline upon Dawkins's couch, for the purpose of roaring at his ease. Of course Mr. D's contrivance for wooing kind Nature's sweet restorer came down with a run. Compound fractures in every bone of its ramshackle body! We are doing our best—or worst to pick up the pieces when, as luck would have it, who should enter but Mr. D. himself! He was so beastly civil and conciliatory, I guessed what was in store for both of us.

"Naturally we make the best of it, and pretend we don't care ; but bad's the best. A fellow can get tired of smoking ; I have learned that ; and you can't go on reading novels for ever. Old Cherton and I write to each other occasionally, very occasionally ; but writing's a bore under these ridiculously aggravating circumstances, and the letters are brief.

"Major Rowlands has behaved like a trump in the affair by giving D. to understand, in the language of eastern allegory (in such case made and provided by the clearly understood regulations of the service), that the town sacred to Lady Godiva and the watch-making interest must henceforward be considered *his* future quarters, so far as Ours is concerned.

"Now, Frank, you must help me. I want *awfully* to be in London just now. Business of really urgent character requires my presence there at once ; or, if not my presence, that of somebody. For the sake of the dear old times, Frank, don't refuse me. I know it will be hard for you to tear yourself from the society of Miss Blue Eyes ; but—old fellow, I won't sermonise ; I am sure you will aid me if you can, *and you can*. Write and say whether I may reckon on you right off."

Fancying I divined the nature of his business ("one of the children of Israel has got hold of him," said I to myself), I replied at once, and told him I was unconditionally at his service. Conceive my dismay on perusing the following remarkable history and request.

"I expected no less, my dear fellow ; only I was afraid that Miss Wilful would stop the way ; and as she might even prove an obstacle to your success, promise not to divulge a word of the business until it is at an end. Remember. And now for a rigmarole which I will endeavour to make as clear to your legal mind as I possibly can. Just before I came here I tumbled

across a Captain Fitzshyser—you know the fellow ; everybody does—at a pigeon handicap, and had a few bets with him. He got the worst of it ; but—a circumstance some of the fellows over here are pleased to consider remarkable—he parted. Again I met him, on this occasion in a crowd, at Croydon ; and again we foregathered. We had a lot of wagering, posting each time, until he was broke of his ready cash ; so over the last race but one, we arranged a deal for a mare of his, a clever little hunter, just up to my weight. I do not mean to say she was quite worth the money she stood for in our transactions, but I preferred her to the gallant Captain's autograph, and certainly to the problematical chance of an interview with him at Knightsbridge on the following Monday. We began by posting, and—it suited his book that afternoon to go square, I suppose—we posted to the end. Wilkinson was with me, and he, liking the mare amazingly, begged the loan of her for a few days with the Hursley, for the purpose of qualifying her for the Hunt Stakes at Basingstoke. I cheerfully acceded to his request, left her with him, and came to Ireland.

“It appears that one day after a buster with the H. H., Wilkinson chanced upon our old friend Fitzshyser, ‘who happened to be in the neighbourhood,’ drawn thither, it may be presumed, by a local pigeon match, for Fitz is not proud. They wineed together, and Wilkinson—a frank sort of fellow, and not at all averse to the sound of his own voice—told the Captain that the mare was a moral for the Hunt Stakes, especially if I had the mount. He should like to back her—it was all two to one on—but it was impossible to make an investment before the day. Well, to make a long story short—fancy !—the Captain accommodated Wilkinson with an even hundred against her, and W. put it down to me ! Of course he believes

it to be a good thing, and so do I, all square and above board, but why the deuce should Fitzshyser lay the money? That's what I can't understand.

"I hate to be done, but done I shall be, if I or you, Frank, do not sport silk; for Wilkinson, apparently not content with absenting himself (he left with his mother for Cannes last week), has placed the mare with a fellow at Edgeware, who is notoriously hand and glove with the school 'managed' by my opponent—even by Fitzshyser! Now, Frank, when can you tear yourself away from Yorkshire? I impatiently await your reply "

To write and say it was impossible for me to grant his request would have been to forfeit my word; but I did—having the fear of the elders before my eyes—beseech him to re-consider his request. In reply, I received the following, marked "Immediate."

"You must ride! M-u-s-t!! I implore you to take a ticket for King's Cross by the very next available express. Pray don't cut up rough, old fellow, and say—what would only be natural—'This *is* cool!' but start. Leave me to condone the outrage on Miss Clevedon's peace of mind—hereafter—when you are turned off. If Jack Masters's present on that day don't purchase his pardon, why hang me—but this is lunacy. Without boring you with details, it is sufficient for me to say that I am yet virtually under arrest, and likely to be for some days to come, although I am not in the least apprehensive of the ultimate result.

"Wilkinson has got me into a nice tangle. Fitzshyser has been peppering the mare all round, and several friends of mine—*particular* friends—have shot him. Bad enough that, 'but worse remains behind!' Mathilde—that's her name—is gone!

If you can successfully struggle through this abominable scrawl, do."

The abominable scrawl ran as follows:—

"Sur,—You are bein' had as clean as a wissle you fancy I dessay that matilder as wos at Edgwar is theer still, but she ain't. She's a good deal nyer Sent pauls. I sed I'd do it I tolld Ginger I meen Willum Skeet as I'd round on him an' I've rounded. A cove like him as allus got hiz livin' by buzzin' won't kum it over me for nothin' Fust they desides to send her to Brumlcly an' run her in a Steeple Chas in another nam', and then after she dun it at Basinstoke to hobject. Then they ses no bets don't allus go with stakes. So another dodge will hev to be tried. I don't know wot you means to do, but Mester Wilkinson, him as brote the mare his not in the way and a sertin gallant captin' as ded a sharp as ever hokussed a blew Rock or put Jonny Armstrong up is. Crak that nut.

"I am awake an' no fear, and if theer's to be a ramp i must have my bit of silver out of it, only as Ginger an' me as had sum words and I'd like you to kweer his manoevers i jest rite to put you fli.

"Gorge the potman at the Currycomb and Spunge nos wheer to find me, only don't kum yerself send.

"Hoping this ere finds you arty as it leaves me at present.

"NAPOLEON TOASE."

"Perhaps, my dear Frank, it would not be prudent for you to show at the haunt of this precious set, but if you would communicate with an old servant of ours, a 'cute canny Yorkshireman, who is now in London, the pair of you, aided by Napoleon Toase, might nip the conspiracy in the bud. Only play *their* game—don't appeal to the law. Our old fellow's

address I enclose—his name is Timothy Swenson (call him ‘Tim’), likewise a document authorising you to take possession of Mathilde.”

“No chance of making up with Gerty after the usual fashion,” thought I to myself “Yet, after all, a breeze will do neither of us any harm, and—oh, these women!—my word is pledged. I must be off.”

Traps to pack, “Bradshaw” to consult, a difference with one’s future wife to be temporarily healed, a formal leave-taking with one’s future father-in-law to be got through; these matters take time.

Behold me, having manfully struggled with the material, and scamped the sentimental, obstacles which impeded my departure from Lofthouse Grange, a passenger by the (more or less) fast train which *waits* upon the up express at Darlington, at length fairly on the direct road to King’s Cross.

Napoleon Toase and Timothy Swenson have each been bidden to the terminus station to take part in a council of war.

CHAPTER II.

“PORTER, what station is this?”

“Holloway, sir.”

“All right! catch this portmanteau. I will get out here.”

I had changed my plans. Since I knew nothing about Napoleon Toase, I decided to approach him through Timothy Swenson, with a view of testing him. I hoped to effect my object by pulling up thus at Holloway, and taking a cab to King’s Cross.

"Great Northern Hotel. In less than no time, you——"

"All right, sir. Tch, tch." A clean cut of the whip—a flounder—a mighty tug at the shabby harness—and the poor old ex-plater was bowling along as only your well-bred London screw can.

The last old lady with much baggage, animate and inanimate was being funereally borne from the arrival platform as I stepped from the opposite side of the station, when—

Napoleon Toase for a hundred! accompanied by his bosom friend, George, the potman of the Currycomb and Sponge. It lingered and listened.

"You see, George, something may have stopped him at the very larst minute. And though I fancy he's not the cove to mind chuckin' away his coin, you must recklect, George, that he's a lawyer, and 'll nat'rally look for full and correct change for his blessed sixpence. Now——"

"But Nap——"

"Al-low me. Wot I was goin' to remark is this ere. Wen I read this telegram, I says to myself, says I, 'pre-cisc.' And precise it was, George, as you could swear if called upon."

"We was here ten minutes afore she arrived."

"A pound to six D—which is all forty to one, George—on that. Then, what I repeat is, it ain't no fault of ours."

"Ours!"

"Hold 'ard. Well, he hasn't turned up by this train, he hasn't sent no message to the orfice, but I will venture to take slight odds that I shake hands with him when the next train arrives—at nine fifteen."

"Will you," thought I; "I doubt it."

"Then, Nap, old man, you'll have to come alone. There's that bagatelle match on to-night, and although the guv'nor and

you is sharin' the book over this 'ere, neither him nor me could be spared from business at nine fifteen. You'll have to tackle Mr. Bevan by yourself."

A most satisfactory arrangement—for me. I hastened along the platform in the faint hope of finding the old Yorkshireman yet at his post, intending, in the event of failure, to cautiously look him up at the temporary residence of Mr. Masters the elder, in Manchester Square. Luck was on my side; there stood Tim, in serious conversation with one of the porters. A shrewd, bright-eyed clear-complexioned old fellow of fifty or thereabouts—sturdy type of a tribe who devote their lives to the noble animal, just as much as dwarfed, sallow, unlovely Napoleon Toase was the type of the more numerous class who have no more regard for the horse than they have for a skittle-ball or a rat that is played or worried for profit. The one an unscrupulous sharper, to whom horse-racing was a game, and West Drayton the finest place in all England for playing it; the other (I felt certain) a sportsman of the old-fashioned sort, his memory rich in recollections of glorious days on Doncaster Moor.

"He may have run up wi' t Midland," observed Tim, as I approached; "but he said he would come here, and——"

"Here I am Tim," I interposed.

"Mr. Bevan?"

"Yes, Tim. If you will step over to my hotel, I will explain everything."

"Aw thowt you wad be here, sir," observed the old boy, his eyes sparkling with delight, "mead sartin on't. Aw've a letter for you frae Master John."

The information in Jack's missive was of a welcome nature, although it did not relieve me of my responsibility in respect of

the hunt meeting at Basingstoke. "I am nicely out of my scrape here," he wrote, thanks chiefly to Rowlands' kind offices, and my own willingness to partake of the slice of humble pie which the authorities provided for the entertainment. Dawkins is gone, never to return. I might, if I liked, come over to England, and ride the mare myself, but I think it will be better for me to remain quiet for the present. Carry the matter through, as I am sure you will, triumphantly. Enclosed is a document, duly signed, sealed, and attested, empowering you to take possession of Mathilde—that is, supposing the Fitzshyser school have the assurance to object to your temporary assumption of ownership—and they are not the people to throw a chance away, I am told. Write to me at your leisure and believe me my dear boy," et cetera.

At my hotel, I gave the old servant his instructions. He was to take my place that night, meet Toase, drink with the little traitor, appear to fall in with his views, and, if possible, obtain an early interview with the mare. "Work him after your own fashion, you know, and if he thinks that I am not likely to arrive in London for a few days, let him think on." The trusty old fellow gravely contracted his right eyelids and departed.

Before I went to bed he returned. One part of my instructions had been obeyed to the letter. Closing the door with unnecessary care he, in a husky whisper that was odorous of strong waters, remarked—

"It's all right, sir."

"How—what do you mean, Tim?"

"Aw—aw've sheen him."

"Had a glass or two with him, eh?"

"Sheveral."

"So I should have supposed. You—that is, was he sober when you parted with him?"

"Not ex-actly, sir. They carried *him* to bed."

"*That* will do. Come to me in the morning at ten o'clock."

"Mak' it eleven, sir. On'y mak' it eleven, an' all hae somethin' to tell you. Nobbut mak' it eleven, an' 't 'll be all reight."

"Very well; eleven be it."

He touched his hat with solemn deliberation, and retired; on this occasion at the safe if somewhat unsteady rate of two English miles an hour.

He duly kept his appointment, looking perfectly "solid and sober"—as the north-country phrase has it. My countenance, as I wished him good morning and hoped he was well, must have betrayed some astonishment at his marvellous weight-carrying capacities, since, with a broad grin, he replied—

"Weel, sir? Nivver was better i' my life. You little mowdywarp 'd nivver be yabble tee upset me, Mr. Bevan, not if he lived to be as awd as Mac Thuselah. Him! Poor creature. You cuddent put us tegither if it was ivver seä. However, let me tell me story. Aw turned oot at faave o'clock this mornin——"

"At five, Tim," I interrupted; "why so early?"

"Aw'll tell ye. Little Toase yonder said he thowt he could get me a look at the mare this mornin', for the bit lad who does her up (and who's as thick it swindle as on'y of 'em—they're a bonny set, Mr. Bevan, as ivver I heerd tell on) is a confederate of his. He was to see him aforehand, an' I was to drop upon 'em baith as if by accident. I leave you to guess *how* aw managed it, but I did. So noo, sir, if you doant want on'y dealin's with a wretch who is gannin' tee sell his master, show me the bonny-side o' that door, *I'm standin' in!*"

"No! This is famous. Go on, Tim."

"Hark to their little plot. Not satisfied with doin' a ramp over the Hunt Stakes at Basingstoke, they have entered the mare in another name, given her another owner, and another everythink, for a Sellin' Plate at the same meetin'."

"But that is impossible. She would be known."

"Mebby she wad, and mebbly she waddunt. Aw sud know her amang a thousand. But that's all provided for. At present she has two white heels; noo there wēant be a white hair about her when she's saddled for that sellin' race. Then this is how they reckon to work it. Mathilde runs in the Hunt Stakes and wins; another, a six-year old gelding belonging to the Fitzshyser division, is likewise started, and runs a second. Mathilde is to be steered by a jockey recommended by my master's friend, Mr. Wilkinson. That jockey is as deep in the mud as the captin is in the mire. The second (and they'll be second somehow) 'll be ridden by a groom who calls hissel a gentleman farmer—another confederate o' the captin's. If they find they have the game in their own hands they'll win with the favourite (and a pony weel laid out 'll mak' owt favourite at a cocktail pleace like Basingstoke), and the second 'll object on the ground of foul ridin.' Aw need not tell you, sir, that the evidence which 'll be given on that head 'ud convince the Admiral hissel."

"What a diabolical plot!"

"And that's not all. Most of the bettin' on the mare 'll be forst past the post. The other will be backed here in London, They will be able to get a bit out of the objection, and some-think both ways out o' the Sellin' Plate; first by backin' the mare safe, then by layin' a shade of odds she don't get the stakes."

"Why, Tim, you almost take my breath away. What seoundrels!"

"No doubt about that, Mr. Bevan. As for takin' your breath away, beggin' your pardon, that's rubbish. *I'm* not astonished—and I'm a countryman. I thought you London gentlemen wor up to all these little games."

"Not I, indeed, Tim. But what must I do?"

"Nawt."

"You surely do not advise me to allow the affair to go on in this way?"

"Aw do though. One moment, sir. If you begin to stir in it, Mr. Napshanks 'll step in, and with a broke-down mare you and my master 'd have precious little ehance of settlin' this gallant captin."

"You speak in riddles, Swenson," I observed, with some severity.

"Do I. Aw thowt ivverybody had heard of Mr. Napshanks. Did you ever have a blow on the shins? Of course you have. You reek'leet how sair it was—how bad to bide. Now, supposin' poor Mathilde was to have a number of blows on her shins before the race—do you think it 'ud better her ehance?"

"I undertand you now."

"Mr. Napshanks is clever, but he wants time. Noo if you let these vagabonds fancy that they are not suspected, they'll neither break down the mare nor blow her out just afore the race with a bucket of water and a feed of carrots, but 'll trust to Johnny Armstrong to pull off one ramp, and a coat of paint to help 'em through the t'other."

"Then you advise me——"

"Do this, Mr. Bevan. You mun forgive my presumption, but I've seen their hands and—you have the last trump card in

your pocket-book, sir, Maister John's authority. I know how they'll play 'em."

"My good fellow, speak your mind."

"Well sir, supposin' you get a telegram sent to me at the office here, frae you at Lofthouse Grange, sayin' that it will be impossible for you to come to London just now, an' that Lieutenant Masters will hae to mak' some other arrangements?"

"A capital idea."

"Aw can keep an eye on the understrappers, and another on the mare, until the day."

"Then *I* deal with the captain."

Telegraph to whom? Ah! a sudden flash of inspiration! To Gertrude. Now that Masters was safely out of his serape would honourably explain the reason of my abrupt departure. We could be reconciled! I wrote:

"Frank Bevan, London, to Gertrude Clevedon, Lofthouse Grange, Saltburn-by-the-Sea. Darling Gerty,—A long letter will reach you in the morning explaining everything. I do so miss you. It is of serious importance to me, yourself and others" [a pious fraud this, to frighten her into obedience] "that you copy the following and send it as from me at once. Say nothing to papa till you have received letter, then use your own discretion. Will set about writing now."

True and not true. She was written to, of course, but not until I had despatched urgent epistles—firstly, to a friend of mine who was in a position to afford me the training necessary to get into condition for the Basingstoke affair; and, secondly, to Nevin, my father's chief clerk, informing him of my presence in town, and requesting him to let me know how matters sped at the office. I naturally cautioned him against

disclosing to Mr. Bevan, senior, my unexpected return from Yorkshire.

I carry no lumber, consequently the seven or eight days' regular work which I obtained in Berkshire sufficed to put me in tip-top fettle, and enabled me to scale the requisite weight, ten stone ten, with ease. Gertrude wrote in the tone and at the length that might have been expected (feminine forgiveness is ever garrulous); Mr. Nevin "took the earliest opportunity of intimating that Mr. Bevan had but once spoken of me, and then it was to express a wish that I would soon return and make arrangements for the wedding" (brave news for Gerty!); while in due course came brief notes from Swenson and Jack. The former ran thus :—

"It's all right, sir. They have gorged the bait. They think you won't be at Basingstoke. I will, but shan't show *viii* just before the race. I don't want to lose sight of the mare."

The only line in Jack's note that was of immediate interest referred to his friend, Major Rowlands ! "He is going to spend a few days with some family connections who live near Winchester, and he will run over to the races. Make yourself known or not as you see fit. I have told him everything."

The morning came, the chaise—that is to say, the cab—was brought, and I was presently on my way to secure the first train down. The weather was dull and foggy. "Bad for roarers," thought I; but, as there was nothing the matter with the mare's pipes, I was not uneasy. I wondered if I should like my mount. Almost the only horsey passenger discharged at Basingstoke, I experienced no difficulty in obtaining a fly, and at once made my way to the course, anxious to dispose of my traps before the enemy appeared.

“ Have a card, Capting—cor-rect and hofficial? ”

I purchased a card, and eagerly sought for confirmation of Swenson's portents. The wretches had not deceived him. In the Hunt Stakes Jack's name was entered *en regle* ; while the Selling Plate contained an entry which I intuitively felt was Mathilde, under an *alias*—“ Capt. Fitzshyser's b. m. Katinka 6 yrs. (£50), *white jacket with gold seams, crimson and gold cap.*” The Selling Plate was the last race on the card. A bad arrangement for the fund, but admirable for the “ ramp,” thought I. On such a leaden day it would be almost impossible to distinguish one horse from another, especially if they were unpunctual—which they invariably are at such meetings. A liberal *douceur* to one of the subordinate officials insured the safety of my costume ; and after sauntering over the course—which was mostly grass, with no water jump, and, except at a stiffish natural fence, a quarter of a mile from home, easy of negotiation — I returned to the weighing-room, secured the services of a handy valet, dressed and weighed in the trying scales, slipped the geranium-green cap into my pocket, and, wearing an overcoat to conceal the remainder of the colours (orange and scarlet braid), sauntered towards an unfrequented part of the rapidly filling ring to reconnoitre. No sign of Swenson. Yes ! there he was, and Toase with him, outside a group of loungers who were taking stock of a handsome bay mare at the farther corner of the paddock. Satisfied that everything was progressing as favourably as could be wished, I withdrew from the enclosure and walked towards the starting-post with the rest of those patrons of the meeting who were desirous of beholding the tardy fall of the flag. Swenson was mounting guard, but alone. Where was Toase ? I had scarcely given that ornament of the Turf a thought when

he passed, in company with another nomadic member of the profession.

"You take my tip, Gipsej, and back her fust past the post. The Captain ain't to be trusted for five minutes together."

"Then it's a good thing, Nails, eh?"

"Lor blesh yer! She could carry one of Pickford's vans and then cop."

"I'm on."

They were weighing for my event when I returned to the stand. Captain Fitzshyser, full of life and misplaced energy, was fussing about the weighing room, in attendance chiefly on Mr. Mivins, who, according to the card, was about to ride his own horse Gaberlunzie.

"Here, Mivins, take this half-pound cloth. Now you'll do. What the deuce has become of Ventress?"

Ventress, the jockey recommended by Mr. Wilkinson—the artist who, in my absence, would pilot the mare.

"What does he ride, Captain?" inquired the clerk of the scales."

"He—oh, Mathilde."

"I beg your pardon," remarked I, in superfluously loud and distinct tones; "there is some mistake, *I* ride Mathilde."

"You!" thundered Fitzshyser, spinning round on the instant and glaring unutterable things; "and who the devil are you?"

"Allow me to present you with my card;" and, the while pushing forward to the scales, I handed him the pasteboard.

"And is *this* your authority, Mr. Francis Bevan? What do you take me for?"

"I would rather not say just at present," I replied; "by-and-by I may oblige you. It is *not* my authority, Captain

Fitzshyser ; it is simply a slight contribution to the proof of my identity. You wanted to know who I am ; there's my card. I am a lawyer ; Lieutenant Masters, my old friend, asked me to ride his mare Mathilde, and here I am. If Lord Faulchion will oblige me by glancing at this document" (his lordship, one of the stewards, had approached during the altercation), " he will be satisfied of my right to act on behalf of the owner of the mare."

" But, my lord, this paper may be forged——"

" You,"—I began, forgetting my diplomacy in a laudable desire to promote the purification of the British army by annihilating him on the spot, when Lord Faulchion smilingly raised his hand and said,—

" Gentlemen, you forget. Here, Rowlands."

Rowlands, Jack's friend—for it was he—a middle-aged " officer and gentleman," drew near.

" Is this document genuine ? "

" But, my lord," interposed Fitzshyser, " what can your friend know more than any one else ? Is he an expert ? "

" He shall tell you."

" Genuine ?—unquestionably. I saw every word of it written ; that is my signature at the foot."

The Captain was completely routed. He had not a word to say in reply to the Major's crushing testimony, and so, with fine malevolence, he once more turned upon poor me.

" Well, since you have a right to the mare, you had better find her."

" Oh, nivver ye fash yoursel' aboot that, Captin. She's fund, hard enufe, and waitin' for Mr. Bevan outside here. Your lad's gean to get some refreshments, and Mathilde is

under the care of two or three police officers and a detective. Aw nivver thraw a chance away."

The weighing-room buzzed with sounds of suppressed excitement. I felt I was becoming a hero. The Captain, who had led at the start, was nowhere.

Tim conducted me to the mare, and I mounted. As I was leaving the paddock, I noticed that two of the numbers in the telegraph were being changed. Swenson explained this as he walked at the head of Mathilde before I cantered.

"They have changed the jockey: Ventress rides Gaberlunzie. Watch it, sir; watch it: they mean tee object."

The field numbered nine. Although it was a three-mile journey, there was a false start, but I was not in it. Neither was Ventress. When the flag fell I took a pull at the mare and, with Gaberlunzie, who stuck to me like a burr to a fashionable chignon, laid off. I had the foot of the whole of them except Mr. Mivins's horse, and might have led them at any part of the race, but I did not try. The mare ran with perfect generosity, and that was enough. Only once before the finish did I indulge her with her head, and that was when I passed the stand the second time. I could distinguish amid the roar of the ring the irrational sound of "Mathilde wins!"—irrational, since we had yet more than a mile to travel, and as I took a pull after passing the stand, recognised the voice of Swenson admonishing me to "watch it!"

A little over half a mile from home they were all settled except Gaberlunzie and mine, and I thought to myself, "Now or never." One touch of the whip and a gentle prick of the persuaders sufficed; I was a clear length and a half a-head on the inside. Accepting this as a challenge, Ventress came with a rattle on the whip hand, and at it we went ding-dong. He had

the worst of the weights, and I felt sure if I could only land safely over the last fence, that I should do him for speed. But the scoundrel had his instructions. He rode for his life—we were neck and neck—to the fence, we rose together, and in the act of rising he caught Gaberlunzie a smart cut over the head, drove him on to me in landing, and we were both down, both unshipped, but neither of us disabled. I could hear yet hell of the ring as, half-dazed, I remounted (how, it would be impossible to say) and put the gallant mare at the slight hill which composed the last furlong of the course. Gaberlunzie was again with me, and another, whose jockey cried out, “Stick to him, Dick ! I saw it !”

“And so did aw, thou rank bad ’un ?” cried with a rough Yorkshire oath, a now familiar voice. “Watch it, sir ; watch it !”

I won cleverly by a length ; but I was not to have the stakes just yet. Swenson was there, and so were the officers to guard me into the weighing-room, or else, I firmly believe, I should never have drawn the weight. As it was, two attempts were made to annex a pound cloth. I was seated in the scale, when Ventress and his precious master rushed forward. Said the latter—

“I object to the winner of this race.”

“Oh, very good, Captain,” replied the judge ; “deposit the fiver. On what grounds ?”

“Foul riding.”

I said nothing. The room was cleared, and the stewards proceeded to investigate the charge. I had heard some hard swearing in my time, but the lying exploits of Ventress and the rider of the third horse in the race far exceeded for audacious circumstantiality anything that had ever come under my notice.

The stewards were most painstaking, but they could not shake the testimony of Ventress and his witnesses. It was all two to one against probity.

"Did no one else see this occurrence?" asks Lord Faulchion, anxiously.

"Yes; I did, my lord," exclaimed Swenson; "on'y they weant let me come in."

Timothy had been disposing of the mare. His eloquent description of the cannoning had gone far towards convincing the stewards, when Captain Fitzshyser, with a meaning smile, remarked—

"My lord—this man—who is he?"

"Just so," chimed in the other steward; "a most pertinent question. My good man, what interest have you in the matter?"

"Could *you* stand by and see your master robbed?"

"Ah! your master——"

"The owner of the mare."

"I suspected as much," observed the cautious steward.

"I believe this Yorkshireman," said Lord Faulchion bluntly.

"That may be, Faulchion," observed the doubter; "but you must admit that he is an interested party. If we could have another witness, of unquestionable impartiality, now."

"Will you accept me?" said Major Rowlands, who had so far been a silent spectator of the scene.

"Most decidedly, Rowlands," said Lord Faulchion.

"Only too glad," observed the other steward.

"In a few words, then, let me say that the evidence which has been tendered by the jockey, Ventress, and his witness is utterly, wickeuly false. Mr. Bevan rode a fair race, and so far from the

collision being of his producing he did all in his power to prevent it. The mare could have won at any part of the race, and that the rider of Gaberlunzie knew. He might or might not be acting according to his instructions—that is for him to explain. But if ever there was a case for the Grand National Hunt Committee this conspiracy is one.”

Lord Faulchion consulted with his brother steward for a few minutes, and then said,

“The objection is overruled.”

“And we have won,” whispered Swenson.

“Shall I tell you by how much?”

I replied, with an inquiring look—

‘BY A HEAD, to be sure.’

EWBANK O' BOULDERBY.

CHAPTER I.

"**B**ESSIE, your father has set his heart on this match."

"Yes, I sadly fear he has."

"Fear!—but I guess what is in your mind, and knowing what's in your father's, have only to say that if you desire peace and quietness, you will give Stephen Ewbank his answer. He's no good."

"Mother."

"I say it. Two years ago he was as canny a lad as could be. Look at him now."

"Do be just, mother. He cannot help it."

"Rubbish! The 'cannot help it's' never try. I liked him once. Let him fancy that I believed it was to play cribbage with me, or hold arguments with your father, ~~that~~ brought him across the fell in all weathers, and, when he asked for you, Bessie, I didn't say 'No': neither did I say 'Yes' I told him Wilfrid Stanton's daughter was worth waiting for Ay, weep on, my girl—only at your age it would have taken a great many Stephen Ewbanks to have made *my* eyes wet. His aunt died. She was a poor muddlin' body, with her chapel ideas and cranky ways: much too good for the inside of a creditable

dairy, as every ounce of her butter proved. I'm sure I hope she's better suited where she is—and it didn't surprise me to hear that she'd left the farm to plausible John, who never did a wrong thing in his life, or a right one either, with his designing treats to the Sunday-scholars and meat teas to the ministers. But Stephen! *He* took his aunt's death to heart, to be sure, for the most part in convenient taverns, and wandered up and down the country side like a tinker come into a fortune, and then——”

“Mother! it is cruel of you to asperse him thus.”

“Nearly as bad. Is there ever a cricket match, or a wrestling, or any such idle excuse for wasting good daylight, he is not atop of? And when winter comes round it's hunting with young Lord Bassenthwaite, if you please, or murdering game with a party from the Hall, until I should fancy there's scarcely a penny of his mother's bit of money left. Now, Mr. Newington——”

“That odious name! Stephen ought to have shared Boulderbey equally with John, and Lord Bassenthwaite has promised if——”

“‘Promised’ and ‘if,’ my dear! Why, there's not a pair of worse traitors in the dictionary! Ask your father what he thinks of them for a marriage portion.”

“Stephen would have emigrated, I think, if I had given him the least encouragement. He has been unfortunate lately, poor fellow, but you would not have him take a hind's place?”

“And why not? As good as he have stooped lower, to rise higher than ever he will, I'm thinking. Anything would be better than lazing about as he is doing now—I am coming.”

The eyes of the fair girl sparkled defiantly and her lips

stirred with a half-coined expression of anger as a querulous voice summoned her mother to the adjoining room.

Wilfrid Stanton, at present temporarily invalided, was an admirable specimen of a class of Northerners who, endowed with plenty of physical stamina, apt at figures, and born rulers of their fellows, help much to spread a belief in the invincibility of luck. He had easily passed from brickmaking, his original occupation, to constructing railways, and was now one of the shrewdest and most successful of contractors: with "views" as to the bestowal of his one spoilt child, the which he was quite determined should be carried out.

Mrs. Stanton returned after a brief absence, and carefully closing the door, sat down beside her daughter, saying in a low, grave voice—

"Your father heard all we said. He declares—but there, I will not repeat his words. My darling, you know how we have loved and indulged you; do not forget that we would not cross you now if it were not for your good."

For some moments the fall of a cinder from the grate and ticking of the clock were the only sounds that broke the meaning stillness. At length, starting from the constrained attitude into which she had insensibly fallen on her mother's reappearance, Elizabeth Stanton suddenly left the room, and almost as suddenly returned.

"Bessie," said her mother in a tone of surprise, "you are surely not going out at this hour?"

"I must, or break my word."

"To meet him?"

"Even him, mother. I will not detain you long."

The mother made no reply, and the daughter sped to the grate. She had not far to go. Near a clump of firs that threw

shadows black as themselves across the moonlit road—within sight and well-nigh within hearing of her cosy little Westmoreland home—Stephen Ewbank was waiting. He, tall and stalwart, a handsome son of the soil, strode swiftly forward, and would have clasped her in his arms, but she drew shrinkingly back.

“Lizzie!” he exclaimed, “what has happened? It was only last night——”

“You may say last night, Stephen. I have grown old and wise since then. My mother has been talking about you.”

“She——”

“Is my mother, Stephen. We must part.”

“I see,” he exclaimed. “You have joined the rest of them. You mistrust me.”

“No. Not yet. I bid you go while there is time for you to restore to others the Stephen Ewbank whom they once knew and esteemed, my Stephen Ewbank who—might—possibly—not—be mine,—I think,—if he—remained.”

It was well for his better self that the gentle accusing angel heard not the first fierce answer which trembled unspoken on his lips. The second, husky and hesitating, was a worthier tribute to her unflinching loyalty. It was a painful interview, but he was another being from the moment he declared that “her will should be his.” Her last words were “Stephen, I do trust you.”

They parted, he to prepare for leaving Westmoreland—England—on the morrow, she to furnish materials to her mother for building a comfortable castle in the air.

Parted, for how long? He neither knew nor cared much. It was true, every word of it, the character which Bessie's ~~surround mother had given him, and, “surround”~~ by her, and

would have frankly admitted the fidelity of the damaging impeachment. On that side of the fell there was not a farmer's son, or yeoman, or miner, who could hold his own against Stephen Ewbank, in a wrestling ring. His invincible "back heel" was known and perpetually glorified by the natives of more than two counties, and there was not a lad his weight who could put in a swinging hipec like his. He was a handsome, clean-limbed, careless fellow, and he loved Bessie, but it had quite needed a rebuke like that which she had just now bestowed to compel him to face the future in the way it ought to be faced. He must be true to himself. She could keep the rival favoured by her father at arm's length. He ground his teeth at the sound of the hated name, and muttered an inarticulate threat which seemed to add to the speed of his steps as he left her and dived into the outer darkness.

His nearest way home lay past the encampment of a gang of navvies who for some weeks had been engaged on a cutting for a new line of railway which was intended to connect that part of lake-land with the excursionist world beyond. He was too deep in thought to look ahead and wonder what made the works and the rude habitations of the men stand out beneath the moon with such unusual distinctness. An explanation was supplied before the night was an hour older.

"Is that you, Mr. Steve?" exclaimed a harsh voice, which seemed to rise with its masculine possessor eerily from the earth.

"It is. What! Alick Cain? Is Kirby too hot, or is it a bit of wire that has brought you so far afield?"

"Neither. I solemnly declare. There's plenty up yonder"—pointing to the encampment—"to clear the countryside of every feather and scut in it without me. It's a long way round, but aw wanted to speak to you."

"To me?"

"Ay. Awm a bishoprick bred 'un, but never mind that. My rustlin' days is onmost over, and there's never a heavy weight in't county tee clip his wings nobbut yoursel; and so——"

"What *are* you driving at?"

"Wait a bit. At Penrith t'other neet they were talking about rustlin', and threapin me down there wasn't a man livin' could fell the Slommacker—you know Hewison Snapperton, o' Cumwhitton—and aw said aw wasn't see sure about that. Wait a bit. We were in the thick of the fratchin, when in comes Mr. Slommacker hissel. 'Wad aw name my man?' says they all at once. Aw said aw wud and aw did. '*My man,*' says I, 'is Stephen Ewbank, o' Boulderby.'"

"And I should like to know what right you had to mention my name in such company?"

"Nobbut wait a bit. Nane at all. But didn't aw see you hipe Ike Teesdale, and wadn't I have bet my life on your fellin' this lump of consate? Sartinly."

"Cain, I have resolved never to wrestle—in fact, I leave the country to-morrow."

"Ony wait a bit and listen. They've finished up there cutting through Catnab, and Mr. Newington—t'engineer chap—as turned on the yal freely, and has made hisself quite at home wi' them. Snapperton is at work on the job, and if you pass by that fire and yon roaring lot, there'll be mischief——"

"What?"

"Somebody's told' him when to look out for you, and they mean a match tee neet. Dinnot gee them a chance."

Stephen Ewbank's first and wiser impulse was to take the advice of his humble admirer; but when he thought of his

rival, and admitted the probability—which he eagerly did—of his being at the bottom of what looked like a vile conspiracy, there came “a tightening twitch all over,” and he strode forth without another word, his companion making noble if fruitless efforts to keep up with him, and beseeching him to “be canny.”

For some moments Steve and his gnarled companion trudged on without exchanging a word. At length, having reached an opening in the road which disclosed a group of men at work in the light cast by a huge fire, the youngster said—

“Stick to me, Alick. There’s the Slommacker. And now for a word with his backer.” Approaching the person in question, he exclaimed—you are Mr.—Mr. Newington, I believe.”

“Supposing I am, what then?”

“Not much. Only *my* name is Stephen Ewbank, and I understand that you have been making rather free with it. Stop—I have not done yet. Now, I never allow anybody to do that without knowing the reason why. What is your game?”

“My game, Mr. Ewbank, as you please to term it—I have no game. I am quite willing to explain, nevertheless. I have a man working in this gang named Snapperton, who is a skilful wrestler; hearing that Mr. Stephen Ewbank was an adept at that sport, I expressed a wish to see you matched. That was all.” And he smiled scornfully, and turned on his heel.

“Wrestle him—ay, and you afterwards, now Mr. Newington, now, sir.”

“Haud thee hand, lad; haud thee hand,” murmured Cain.
~~his burning suspicion.~~ “This is no place for rustlin’.”

"Oh! awm ready," slowly remarked a brawny giant, who, followed by his mates, drew near to Stephen. "Th' 'd better strip."

"First time," said Stephen.

"Verra weel, forst time be it."

Deigning no reply, Stephen proceeded to prepare for the fray. Cain, not unmindful of a whispered consultation between Newington and the Slommaeker, pouring words of sage counsel into Stephen's ear as the too eager youth impatiently kicked off his boots, and tried for the hold.

In the fitful light cast by the fire, obscured too as that was by the restless movements of the muttering spectators, it was impossible for old Alick, Stephen's only adherent, to see that his champion had fair 'play. Twice they essayed the hold, and twice the giant declined to accept Stephen's offer. The third time he caught him unawares, foully, in fact, and putting forth the whole of his brute strength he brought the youth to the ground as though he meant to shake all the breath out of his body.

Stephen moved not. He was insensible. Cain rushed to his assistance, shouting after the retiring group—

"You may well skulk away, ye cowards. Slommacker, thou shall pay for this. Thou snapped him, and thou knaws it. Haud up, my lad, thou's worth a hundred dead ones. Haud up.

"Thanks, I am all right again. Let me rise. I never went like that before."

"Want o' training," replied Alick Cain. "Aw could scarcely contain mysel,' for aw knew if you gat under he'd fall atop with all his weight—an he did. Aw gat you up as well as aw could and browt you here."

"What said Newington?"

"Him? Laughed and said in a fleerin' way, 'This will be a fine tale for old Stanton; well done, Snapperton, there's five shillings for you.' There now, you'll do. Nothing like cold water."

Whether or not the trap into which Stephen had rashly fallen had been contrived by his rival, it was evident that that rival rejoiced in his discomfiture, and meant to make malignant use of it. When Stephen parted with Alick he gripped him by the hand and said—

"Good-bye, old friend, there'll be a return match one of these days, *then* you may back me."

"That I will!" exclaimed the old man,

CHAPTER II.

EIGHTEEN months had elapsed, and, except to those immediately concerned, the startlingly sudden disappearance on one morning of both Lizzie's lovers was almost forgotten. There had been frequent excuses for nine days' wonders since then. Stephen's departure had been deliberate enough, but—Mr. Newington's? Anyhow, the latter had not since been heard of!

Letters, their receipt unforbidden by Mrs. Stanton, who was a shrewd as well as an affectionate mother, were periodically received from Stephen by Lizzie. The old lady was pleased to hear that the boy was doing well, and so was her husband. He, touched to the quick by what he conceived to be Mr. Newington's contemptuous treatment of his daughter, abstained from inquiring after "young Ewbank," but he nevertheless

made careful note of the odd scraps of news which occasionally found their way from across the Atlantic into his dining-room.

Eighteen months had passed, and it was noon of the second day of Silver Tarn Regatta. The boat-racing was over, "the pit-laddies frae canny Newcassel" having once more carried everything before them, and the hot sun shone on a concourse of border-folk of both sexes, who were waiting impatiently for the bell to ring-in the first couple of the wrestlers who had put down their names to compete for Lord Bassenthwaite's prize. The Weardale men had so far been most successful, but it was now gleefully noised abroad that their heavy champion had "put his ankle out, and t' Slommacker had nobbut to gan in and win."

The men from the works were present in hundreds. Mr. Wilfred Stanton, who would not have missed the sight for a very great deal, was there, and Mrs. Stanton, and—her daughter! although it must be confessed that both ladies derived more enjoyment from several entirely independent wanderings by the side of the Tarn than from even a distant contemplation of the bouts of the wrestlers. Aliek Cain was *not* absent, dear me, no! In the lighter-weight contests he had, old and stiff as he was, wrestled his way into the third round, and besides, had been made superlatively happy with a prize for "neatness of costume." His name was actually down with those of men twice his size to try a fall for the Bassenthwaite, but now the bell has rung for the third time, and "John Paterson o' Bewcastle is blawn oot," where is Cain? Why, yonder utterly defiant of fitness, in pursuit of Mrs. Stanton's carriage.

"Have you seen your dow—do you know where Miss Stanton is, ma'am?" he breathlessly asks.

"Hark to the man's impudence—No; yes, she was here this very minute. What do *you* want with her?"

"Oh! now't much: dinnot put yoursel' oot," replied he, petulantly, adding, an instant afterwards—"There she is!"

Before Mrs. Stanton had time to remonstrate, Lizzie, looking excitedly, overpoweringly pretty, approached the impatient old boy and said,

"You are wanted, Mr. Cain, by the side of the ring."

Away he sped at a most surprising rate, and after nearly upsetting Mr. Stanton, crossed to the officials who had charge of the list of competitors, and throwing off his shoes, awaited in semi-gladiatorial costume for the announcement of his name—

"Alexandra Cain, o' Ker'by Moorside, and Stephen Ewbank, o' Boulderby!"

"Ewbank o' Boulderby!" was repeated by a thousand tongues in various tones of wonderment, and when the splendid figure of "*our* Steve" was seen overtopping that of his grizzled adversary, a cheer that could not be restrained rang forth and carried dubiety into the bosoms of Snapperton's mates. Lizzie heard the shout, but she did not know until afterwards that her father had helped to swell its hearty volume.

The bout was brief. Stephen, a browner, possibly a handsomer, and certainly a sterner Stephen than the hero of the untoward Catnab affair, laid the hero of bygone years gently on the greensward, and holding quietly aloof from the friends of his youth, who were naturally anxious to squeeze his right hand into a jelly, *waited for the Slommacker*.

That giant was obviously uneasy in his mind. He had confidently anticipated a walk-over for the prize, and here was a man, maybe able, and he had every reason to believe desperately willing, to dispute its possession. The end was foreseen

from the outset: Ewbank and the Slommacker must come together in the final round, and come together they did.

In the midst of the hubbub which greeted the pair, and cries of "Ten shillin' or a sovereign on this fall" (Cain's voice, clear and conspicuous, announcing the owner's desire to invest on "the blue"), a carriage was driven to the edge of the ring. For a moment only one of the occupants stood up and glanced at the pair: but one moment, Lizzie, yet you threw a lifetime of meaning into those blue eyes of yours as they met those of the smarter and slighter of the wrestlers. It was enough. He smilingly touched the bit of blue ribbon on his arm, turned to his adversary, and in an instant the cry was raised—

"They have hold!"

The Slommacker's play invariably resolved itself into dogged exhibitions of unadorned strength, but for once in his life he found that something more than mere force was requisite to enable him to put down his man. Stephen would not be "gathered," he declined to have his feet knocked from under him; and when he found that his ancient adversary had exhausted *his* tactics, he tried the old back-heel, and amid a veritable scream of delight from his henchman Alick, and a roaring cheer from the crowd, won the first fall of the final round.

They were not long in again coming together, and if the Slommacker looked spiteful, Ewbank felt so. The hold was instantaneous, and, as it chanced, amazingly good for Ewbank. Snapperton was already worsted. "Give him a 'tuein,' Steevie lad! remember t'last time ye met!" No occasion to remind him of that. Stephen had got the more advantageous grip, and he let the Slommacker know it. Every device he could exercise for "tuein" him did he put in force, and after playing his man to his heart's content, he suddenly stooped, and with

one mighty wrench threw the redoubtable Slommacker clean over his head.

I think they would have borne him in triumph from the ring, if the Catnab lads had not torn him to pieces on the way; but from both fates he was spared by—whom think you?—Wilfred Stanton, who gripped him by the hand and hurried him into his carriage.

“Jump in, my bonnie lad! Not a word. Finest buttock I ever saw—I swear it! Enough to pulverise every bone in his body. I heard of that other business. Lizzie, my lass, kiss him!—what, you refuse? Nay, then, I don’t understand women.”

Neither did he. That kind of knowledge is not common, although everybody thinks he possesses it.

They had fairly got beyond the noise of the holiday-keepers, when Stephen said—

“Before I travel another foot I want to say something. Will you stop the carriage?”

The carriage was stopped.

“When I left Westmoreland your intended son-in-law, Mr. Newington——”

“What of him?” said Mr. Stanton, sharply.

“This!” and Stephen handed him a letter.

“How?—the scoundrel!”

This was what Mr. Stanton read aloud:—

“Mrs. Newington, to whom I was engaged when I left Canada, and whose brother summoned me suddenly from Westmoreland, joins with me in hoping that you will forgive my folly.”

“But it’s not quite like his writing—eh!”

“His right arm was damaged when he wrote it.”

"How—what?" inquired Lizzie's father. "Who damaged it?"

"Don't ask."

"Those attentions which you so especially favoured"—the old gentleman winced at this—"were the attentions of a contemptible male flirt. It appears that just before *I* left Westmoreland for Canada he was suddenly summoned thither by a male relative of his present wife. *I* met him in Canada. It was after my interview with him—a rather painful one for him—that he wrote that letter. If you had been present you would not have wondered at the change which took place in his handwriting."

Wilfred Stanton laughed joyously, and exclaimed.

"Wife, I know your opinion; what says my Lizzie?"

"That I TRUSTED HIM when others did not, and shall to the end of my life."

IN SPITE OF THE STAIN.

CHAPTER I.

THE LAST OF THE HAZELDALE STUD.

THE motley, but in all respects distinguished crowd which surrounded the sale-ring in a paddock behind the grass-grown yard of the Castle and Anchor Hotel, in the ripe old borough of Oakington, could not, I imagine, have been drawn thither on such a wretched afternoon in February by an event of less importance in the sporting world than the unreserved sale of the once famous Hazeldale stud. It was a day for the gentlemen of England, sporting and other, to sit at home at ease. A day to pull down the blinds, light the lamps, and seek solace in double dummy, unlimited flirtation with lively Louisa, billiards, or sixpenny Nap. A day to drop Slowcoach a line about that little bill. A day to searchingly test the devotedness of the maniac-martyrs to foot-ball. A day for a bicyclist to give himself a rough up (or down) on a newly metalled road. A day for running a bye at a steeplechase meeting in the home circuit. A day, in fact, for anything in the out-door way rather than the sale of the residue of the once-renowned Hazeldale Stud.

A dismal attempt on the part of the local auctioneer to extract a joke out of the weather met with a shudderingly inarticulate response on the part of the auditors. They, standing round the ring with their thickly-shod feet partly imbedded in damp straw, and suggesting in their sodden ulsters and shiny macintoshes a whimsical resemblance to a string of sheeted thoroughbreds, were bent on business and business only. Let the sale begin.

The catalogue was divided into two parts, with luncheon between. Prior to the discussion of that agreeable argument in favour of free bidding, the more aged of the brood mares, several infirm pensioners who had in their running days more than earned the right to a comfortable asylum, and a few hunters, were amongst the lots that found kindly or speculative purchasers. It was evident, however, that the greater number of the owners and trainers present were holding back for the two-year-olds and horses in training. By the time the auctioneer had pleaded and hammered his way to the end of the first part of the catalogue, the company had appreciably increased. The afternoon train from town brought Lord Arable and his trainer, Seth Dawn, together with Nicholas Ousel, in search of something cheap and handy for West Drayton and Bromley, and Sir James Malachite, on the look-out for a likely jumper. The buyer for the Austrian *haras* was expected to show after luncheon, and so were a party of the —th, and several leading county people.

“Strange old fellow, Squire Russet, was he not?” observed Mr. Stylus, of the *Weekly Snaffle*, to Mr. Ousel.

“You are right, he was,” replied that good judge of a handicap, “especially near the finish. They tell me that he went clean off his head.”

“That shall be true,” interposed Dawn. “But he was

always queer. It is only a couple of months since I ran over here special to see him about that Whirlwind colt—you know?"

Mr. Ousel nodded, and Mr. Stylus, sipping the new brand with the air of a man who knew the difference between grape and gooseberry—which he did—pantomimically intimated that he, also, recollected the colt in question.

"Well, we had got on pretty amicable, and I was beginning to think the deal a certainty (there was only a matter of fifty between us) when we happened to get on to the subject of blood. My word! You should have heard him let out when I said, not thinking what I *was* saying for that matter, that I never knew a Batwing in my life that could stay more than six furlongs——"

"Flittermouse!" interrupted Sir James's stud-groom.

"Yes, yes!" assented Dawn, petulantly, "I know all about him. But he was a jumper, and that was just where the old boy felt the spur. I was not thinking about Flittermouse at all, and he was. I have known many a horse that in a manner of speaking could not stay at all on the flat, do wonders at chasing. Hows'ever, as I was saying, that Flittermouse crabbed me completely. After giving me such a setting down as I never had in my life afore, and don't ever wish to have again—after telling me amongst other things that I knew as much about my business as a chalk jockey, and no more, he turned on his heel and left me, and the very next thing I heard about him was that he was dead."

"Which of the Whirlwind colts was you after, if I may ask the question, Mr. Dawn?" queried, with manifest respect, a shrewd-faced light-weight from the opposite side of the table.

"What! are you a buyer, Cobnut?"

There was a simultaneous laugh in his immediate neighbourhood at the expense of the diffident Cobnut, who, without appearing to notice in the least the amusement he had caused, said simply—

“Well, I might be, bnt—I ain’t. I asked from curiosity.”

“Then I’ll tell you” (Dawn was obviously steadily recovering from the depressing influences of the day). “I’ll tell you, Cobby, and you may tell whoever you like, for I am here to buy that colt, and it won’t be a few hundreds that will stall me off; it was the son of Michaelmas Daisy that I was after.”

“Oh, it was, was it?” replied the imperturbable Cobnut, rising from the table.

“Yes; and what then?”

“Nothing, Mr. Dawn, nothing. I only wish you may get him.” With which remarks the unimpassioned Cobnut lounged leisurely out of the room.

“Did you ever in your life see such a——?” Nobody did, for at that moment Lord Arable, not having heard the beginning of Dawn’s possibly Darwinian question, addressed him from the upper end of the board.

“Pardon me, Dawn, I could not help catching some of your observations, you know. The Squire thought no end of the Michaelmas Daisy colt, did he not? Considered him the flower of the flock?”

“I don’t know nothing about no flowers of the flock, my lord,” replied Dawn, who by this time was nettled at his own want of discretion; “I only know that there’s not better blood in England, and as the colt has grown the right way he is worth anybody’s monkey, that’s all.”

“Oh!” observed his lordship, relapsing into dignified silence.

"Look here," said Ousel, in an undertone to Dawn, "I fancy you have put your foot in it. If you had kept quiet you might have had a cheap look in by yourself; as it is you will have to pay for peeping."

"I can buy against any of them," replied Dawn, sulkily.

"May be you can, and may be you won't."

"Why?"

"Because Cobnut is Lancashire's new trainer, and he is not here to-day for his own amusement."

"What, the Squire's nephew?"

"To be sure."

"You do surprise me. Him that poisoned the old man's mind against young Hazeldale, and made him cut his name out of the will?"

"That's it."

"Then you fancy that he will bid for the colt?"

"I fancy nothing. Until young Hazeldale got mixed up with the Weasel division, and put them fly to the form of the Squire's Cesarewitch pot—you remember Guncotton, don't you?—him and his uncle were hand and glove. It was this Lancashire who gave the old man the office. He scratched the horse an hour before the race, and broke the lot of them, his nephew Hazeldale included, and from that time they never spoke. Now it was Hazeldale who knew all about the yearlings. Not Lancashire. He wants to know. And it strikes me he does know by this time. But, bless us, who is this? Who would have thought of seeing *him* here."

"Why, it is Tom Hazeldale himself," remarked Dawn, in a tone of extreme astonishment.

The entrance of the subject of their conversation, although it did not produce any apparent impression on the company,

was noticed with interest by nearly every person in the room. Like many another fine handsome young fellow of frank spirit and generous nature, who for a season had gone the pace that kills, he was a general favourite wherever he went. There was no harm in him, averred common report, and for once common report spoke the truth. Through trusting too implicitly in the honour of others, he had been driven to reap his not particularly fruitful breadth of wild oats prematurely—an anything but calamitous circumstance when it is borne in mind that for a subsequent rotation of crops to turn out profitably the new seed cannot be sown too soon. There was plenty of time for him to pull himself together and begin afresh, his few honest friends declared, and they did not make the declaration without having first taken into careful account his manifold capabilities for good. It is true that he now possessed little else in the shape of stock-in-trade to begin the real business of life with except those precious unpurchasable boons—youth, a robust constitution and undaunted pluck—but what might not they bring in, wisely worked? After being “dead broke” over Guncotton, he had realized everything he had in the world and paid all his creditors to the uttermost farthing. The effort left him with an impoverished pocket, but his lightness of heart more than compensated for that. He could look the world fearlessly in the face. Indeed, much as he regretted the loss of his uncle’s confidence, and the unhappy fact that the once affectionate old man died thinking ill of him, he could have left England with comparative serenity but for ——. One may fill in the hiatus. Throughout his rapid season, and a brief and brilliant season it was, in its way, he had not given much more than passing thought to the sunny face, graceful form, and sweet nature of Grace Redthorne. Her father, Colonel Redthorne, was his

uncle's dearest friend. They were neighbours. Grace had been brought up to look upon Squire Russet as a second father. From her childhood he had doted upon her. Tom and she were playmates when they were home for their holidays. He was a couple of years her senior, which in the early days of their communion gave him the right, he seemed to think, to pose on all occasions as her guardian—her loftily chivalric protector. As time sped the relationship between them had insensibly changed, and it was leaving her that troubled Tom's mind now. Neither of them had ever said a word about love. To him, in his sallet days, Gracy was simply "the jolliest and finest and best girl, mind you, that ever lived!"—nothing more. The idea of making her his wife had not then entered his mind; but when circumstances made his departure from England a necessity, he felt that he was leaving for ever the only woman he would have cared to marry. Alas! Their union was impossible—even if she desired it, which (the absurdity of the idea made him smile) she assuredly did not. His uncle's will had endowed her with the wealth which he knew was once intended for him—Heaven knew he did not grudge her the Squire's gold and lands—and, could he, the impoverished spendthrift, pay mercenary suit to Grace Redthorne, the heiress? No! It was the thought of what might have been that maddened him.

Tom Hazeldale had engaged a berth in the *Orient Pearl*, and expected to sail for Africa on the morrow. He was going to look for diamonds there—if he found none, to put his hand to whatever other plough fortune placed in his way. Meantime he could not resist the temptation of dropping in and seeing the dispersal of his uncle's stud.

As he passes easily along the room to a vacant chair in the

immediate vicinity of Lord Arable, who graciously favours him with the temporary loan of two aristocratic fingers and one aristocratic thumb, he exchanges cheery nods and how-d'ye-do's with the company, every member of which seems the brighter for his advent. He has aged about the corners of the mouth and over the eyebrows since he last met most of them at Newmarket, but not one of his acquaintances scans him narrowly enough to discern the change.

"Come to have a last look at the stud, eh?" remarks the reigning representative of the name of Malachite.

"Yes, Sir James," replies Tom, "I shall probably not have an opportunity of seeing any of them again, for some time to come, if" (to himself) "at all." Then, after a slight pause: "By the way, Sir James, the clerk informs me that you are the owner of the old horse. I am more glad of that than I can say. My poor uncle loved the old chap better than anything on the face of the earth, I do believe, and nothing could have pleased him better, I think, than your finding the veteran a haven. Thank you, Sir James."

"Oh! never fear," observed the baronet, evidently touched by the feeling Tom had put into his remarks, "as long as he lives the old horse shall be made as happy as comfortable board and lodging can make him, and when he does give in, his body shall rest in a grave worthy of his history."

Since young Hazeldale's entrance Dawn had preserved a pregnant silence. Suddenly rousing himself, he said, turning point-blank to Tom:—

"Which do you consider the best of the Whirlwinds?"

"Which?" replied Tom, laughing, "why the best bred one, to be sure. They are all sound, and have grown as horses ought to grow—there is not a pin to choose between them in

point of appearance. So, don't you see, Dawn, you are free to take your choice."

The sceptical trainer did not appear altogether satisfied with this bit of information ; but he held his peace.

"As to the breeding—" began Ousel, when a slight commotion at the door caused by the stepping back of several persons to allow a lady in a riding-habit to pass, caused both him and Hazeldale to turn their heads in that direction. Tom blushed up to the eyes. The tall young lady with the chestnut hair braided in neat bands under her natty little hat is Grace Redthorne. What is *her* motive for coming? He acquitted her on the instant—as soon almost as the thought flashed across his mind—of a desire to ascertain how the sale in which she had a not inconsiderable pecuniary interest was proceeding ; with almost equal swiftness he mentally held her guiltless of a feeling of idle curiosity. What was it ? He had a good mind not to remain. And yet, why should he flee from the girl who had never been other than the sweetest, cousinliest sister to him. He rose from his seat, resolved to face it out, just as the auctioneer informed my lord, Sir James Malachite, and the gentlemen present that, with their permission, he would now proceed with the sale. The rain had cleared off, and there was reasonable prospect of an agreeable afternoon.

CHAPTER II.

COBNUT AND CHARLES LANCASHIRE, ESQUIRE, CONFER TOGETHER.

INSTEAD of proceeding to the stables adjoining the paddock, as Dawn and Ousel simultaneously guessed he was about to do, Cobnut turned suddenly on the landing outside the dining-

room door and ascended a short flight of steps which led to a comparatively modern wing of the ancient hostelry in which certain private rooms intermittently occupied by the neighbouring gentry were situate. He walked along a passage rendered fragrant with the odours of roast and boiled with the air of one who had been there before. A waiter appeared laden with the fragments of an incomplete repast. To him, Cobnut:—

“ Did you deliver my message ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ What did he say ? ”

“ That you were to come to him as soon as ever you were ready, sir.”

“ Then I may go in now ? ”

“ If you please, sir ; Mr. Lancashire is quite alone, sir. Number Eleven, sir.”

In response to a knock and an invitation to come in, Cobnut entered, hat in hand, and found the occupant of Number Eleven engaged in the deliberate discussion of the contents of a cobwebby bottle of the Castle and Anchor’s famous old port.

“ Close the door, Cobby—no, there is no occasion to lock it, Thomas knows me, and is not, like this glorious old stuff here, curious (bring a glass for yourself from the sideboard) besides—what’s the odds ? There is not a card in my hand I am afraid of their seeing. What have you picked up ? ”

“ It’s the Michaelmas Daisy colt.”

“ That I suspected. Who is your informant ? ”

“ Dawn.”

“ Ah ! he knows, does he ? ”

“ Was after the colt himself about a couple of months before the Squire died. If they had not fratched about the Batwing

blood it would have been a deal. He means buying; and I fancy will go to a long figure before he tires."

Mr. Lancashire rose from his seat and paced the room in deep thought. He was what some women would call a handsome man, albeit it was a face that, to use the familiar phrase, would not bear "picking to pieces. The beady weasel-like eyes had a habit of looking you all over doubtfully, saying, as plain as eyes could speak, "This person means to get the better of me, I must be wary." They were the eyes of a huckster—a cheapener—a *mouchard*. Otherwise he was, indubitably, what some women would term a handsome man. Straight, strong, lithesome, shiny, and smug. He was gifted with a mellifluous voice that was well under control ordinarily, but there were occasions in his moments of strong excitement that its tones became distressingly vulgar. I have said that Mr. Charles Lancashire rose from his chair and paced the room. After indulging in his reverie for some minutes, during which period he stared at the carpet in a manner that would have caused Cobnut to doubt whether the fabric was really a Brussels if Cobnut had not been more agreeably engaged, he suddenly paused, and said—

"We must have that colt."

"Very well, sir. That is as *you* please."

"You are quite sure that your friend, my uncle's former head lad, has not played you false about the rough-up?"

"Mr. Lancashire, we can never be sure about anything in this world, but I'll tell you again what he told me. He never went cross with me in his life. We have known each other ever since we were both so high, and I am pretty sure it's right. Well, it was when the old Squire was getting a bit cranky in his head that this here happened. My friend Long Jonas and three of the boys was called out of their beds one

morning long afore daylight, and when they came to where they were told to go, there the old Squire was, the sweat pouring off him, with three of these here young ones and Galleynipper ready saddled for a trial. 'Where's my nephew, Tom?' he says. They tells him in bed. Well, nothing would serve the old beggar (you must pardon me, sir), but that your cousin should be hauled out of *his* bed to inspect this trial, and sure enough hauled out he was. The old Squire would not let nobody, only Mr. Hazeldale, meddle with the saddles and saddle-cloths, consequently not one who was there knew at what weights the lot were runnin' But there was only two in it, the colt by Whirlwind out of Michaelmas Daisy, and Galleynipper, and old Galley was beaten many a length. The other two, as one might say, walked in with the crowd."

"As I told you before, Cobnut, the story is a very pretty story, but to make it useful to me certain details are requisite, which your obliging friend has not supplied. In the first place, is he quite sure that the winner of this mad trial in the dark was the son of Michaelmas Daisy; and, in the next place, has he any idea—*any* idea, mind, I am not particular to a few ounces—of the weights? Now—pardon me for one moment—were I positive that the Michaelmas Daisy colt is the one that my uncle pinned his faith to, no Mr. Dawn should stand between me and possession. Tell me, who unsaddled the our?"

"The Squire, sir."

"Alone?"

"No; your cousin, Mr. Tom Hazeldale, assisted him."

"Then, *he* knew the weights?"

"I doubt whether he did. At any rate, the old gentleman was so precious quick about the cloths and leads, throwing them

here and there and mixing them, that I'd have defied any one to say what was carried."

"Ah!" ejaculated Mr. Lancashire, with an air of relief.

"As they turned, the Squire and your cousin, to go into the house, Long Jonas heard the old gentleman say, 'Tom, my Michaelmas Daisy, you are on a thousand to nothing.' That is all I know."

"Oh, that is all you know, is it?" repeated the interlocutor, mechanically. "Well, Cobnut, in one of Her Majesty's courts of law your all would not be considered much, I can tell you. However, by the way, where is your friend, Long Jonas, now?"

"I am not sure, sir. When last I heard of him he was applying for a place in Dawn's stables."

"What!—Cobby, I credited you with more eyesight. Can't you see through it *now*?"

"No—what?"

"Why, it is your precious friend who has put Mr. Dawn up to the Michaelmas Daisy colt. And you not to tumble!"

"I—shouldn't—wonder," observed Cobnut, gapingly. Then added, in a tone of righteous firmness, "Wait till I get a hold of him, that's all."

"Not a bit of it, Cobnut! My mind is made up. There must be no waiting in the matter. I will have the colt at any cost. Come, let us get down to the ring. They are taking their places," he added, as he looked out of the window, "and," in a tone of agitated surprise, "I'll be hanged if there is not my precious cousin Tom, looking as brisk as the rest of them. Is he," continued Lancashire, with a sneering laugh, "is he a buyer?"

CHAPTER III.

THE SONS OF WHIRLWIND.

BY the time the auctioneer resumed his place in the pulpit, the ring had assumed a somewhat different character from that which it exhibited in the forenoon. Several carriages and the coach of the —th were drawn up on each side of the spot from which the president of the meeting angled eloquently for bids, and the spectators on foot included several persons of considerable importance. The chief of these—in whom we have an interest—were our friend Tom Hazeldale and his cousin, Mr. Charles Lancashire, the latter attended by his faithful henchman, Cobnut. A conspicuous object of attraction, both to Tom and his ily cousin, was Miss Grace Redthorne. Mr. Lancashire had nght her eye with a look which he meant to be irresistible. For once, however, the beads failed to fascinate ; Grace was not to be taken captive by their blandishments. The response he had to put up with was a distant bow of recognition. She would have gladly favoured Tom with a mark of recognition of a more cordial kind, but he steadfastly kept his eyes turned away from hers. She sighed, poor thing, at this lack of cousinly esteem,—for the moment regretted that the Squire had “remembered” her in such a substantial manner in his will,—and finally essayed to manifest an interest in the proceedings of the day. It was a feeble effort, but since it served to conceal her real feelings from the sentimentally obtuse persons by whom she was surrounded, she was content. It was nothing but Tom’s real interest in the sale that saved him from making a fool of himself—as he mentally admitted. It had been so natural in the dear

old days for him to go to Gracy—for Gracy to come to Tom ! And now there was a chasm between them. He was not such an idiot as to despise money or money's worth, and he knew quite well that Grace Redthorne was, in respect of her regard for this world's goods, as thoroughly influenced by the dictates of common sense as himself, but there was nevertheless a gulf dividing him from her which he saw no means of bridging. He could love "his lass and her money too" (in a wise way), but he could not expose himself to the suspicion of paying suit to her merely for the money's sake ; and would she not think he was doing so if he paid suit at all ? Well, all things considered, they were better apart. Once upon a time there was a likelihood of their paths in life converging, now that was impossible. As he caught a glimpse of her, snugly ensconced in the box-seat of the coach of the —th, he felt that there was only one fate for him ; but —pshaw ! let him address himself to the business of the hour ! Another day or so would see him, writing, as it were, the first line of a chapter in his life more earnest than any that he had yet written, and, Heaven help him ! the word woman should find no place therein.

"Gentlemen," observed the auctioneer, after he had knocked down all the equine obstacles that stood in the way of the disposal of the two-year-olds, "you will find on referring to your catalogues that to the description of the next three lots, two colts and a filly, are appended the words, 'believed to be untried.' So far as I was aware when I compiled the catalogue those youngsters had never had even a rough-up since they were foaled, but I have been told to-day that the late Mr. Russet did put them together on one occasion, after he had himself in secrecy adjusted the weights which they respectively

carried, and also that borne by the trial horse. There was a trial certainly, of a kind, but the result of it was never known to a soul except the Squire."

"Are you sure of that, sir?" exclaimed a voice that proceeded from that part of the ring most remote from the auctioneer.

"I am not," replied that functionary, in a tone of surprise, "Who are you that asks?"

"Squire Russet's head lad, sir. I saw the trial, and so did Mr. Tom Hazeldale. Had not you better ask him, sir?"

"Well," replied the auctioneer, laughing, "I have no objections to asking him, but he may have many objections to answering me. I throw myself on your mercy, Mr. Hazeldale."

"And I have nothing whatever to say. My uncle knew how to take care of his own secrets."

"Thank you : now let us get on."

As Tom spoke Grace leant unconsciously over from her seat, as though anxious not to lose a syllable of his reply. Equally keen to catch his answer were his cousin, Mr. Charles Lancashire, and Dawn the trainer. In the opinion of the latter, Tom knew more about the trial than he cared to communicate. Lancashire was persuaded, on the other hand, that the spendthrift had nothing to conceal. Tom preserved an immovable countenance during the trying ordeal to which he was thus suddenly subjected, although it was evident from his flushed brow and closed lips that he felt disturbed. His face seemed to fascinate Grace.

"Now, Barker," continued the auctioneer, "bring out Lot Fifty-three. This is one of the Whirlwinds. A handsomer or more lady-like filly you never saw. There ! Is she not the

very spit of the dam, Devonshire Cream? She is engaged in the Oaks. Now, who will put her in at a monkey? ”

Nobody; but Dawn, after following with all his eyes the beautiful creature's irregular dance round the ring, drew a deep breath, and said to himself—

“ P'raps this is the one. Anyhow, she'll do.”

The lot eventually fell to his bid of three hundred and seventy.

A buzz of admiration ran through the assemblage as the son of Whirlwind and Michaelmas Daisy was led into the arena.

“ As handsome as a pieter ! ” exclaimed Ousel.

“ Big enough to carry a house,” observed Cobnut. “ This *must* be the one.” To Lancashire.

“ Five hundred,” quietly observed Lord Arable, turning for a moment from the colt to nod to the auctioneer.

“ Six,” said the agent of the Austrian Government.

“ Seven,” said Mr. Lancashire.

“ Eight,” “ nine,” and “ a thousand,” came in rapid succession from different parts of the ring, followed by a brief interval of silence. Lord Arable during that pause withdrew from the competition, but neither the Austrian nor Mr. Lancashire was yet rebuffed. The former cautious buyer examined the colt again with almost microscopic care, and then, after a whispered consultation with his English adviser, a capable judge of racing stock, added another fifty to the price of “ the Whirlwind.”

“ Twelve hundred,” was Lancashire's further bid.

“ And fifty,” the Austrian's.

The movement and murmurs of the crowd evidenced its interest in the gradually warming conflict. All eyes were fixed on Lancashire. Even Miss Redthorne and Tom gazed at him with interest. He began to feel his importance in the scene.

It was a sordid duel, but might it not be pregnant with heroic possibilities? Grace was looking on. His cousin was scanning him with amazed steadfastness. His beads of eyes had caught Tom's look, albeit they were not apparently bent towards the spot where young Hazeldale was standing; and, more than all, he was now firmly persuaded the Michaelmas Daisy colt was "the flower of the flock!"

"Come, Mr. Lancashire, you are surely not defeated?" urged the auctioneer. "Shall I say——?"

"Thirteen hundred," replied the employer of the by this time exultant Cobnut.

"Thank you. Now, sir," addressing the Austrian, "it is your turn."

Another careful inspection of the colt, another conference, and another fifty guineas are added to the price of the youngster.

Lancashire's mind is made up. Albeit what your canny Yorkshiremen would call "a durable hand at a bargain," and relishing few exercises more than the laudable one of getting the better of a metallic adversary, the colt shall be his. He is moved by a mixed motive, and the chief element therein borders on the sentimental. The tyrannic thought in his mind, which makes all other thoughts its slave is—"Grace Redthorne is looking on!" In his mood it does not matter much what sort of pose he assumes, so that she looks and marvels. His is a cunning, not a logical brain. Never mind what the cost, he will make an impression!

"Mr. Lancashire, shall we say another fifty?"

"Fifteen hundred!" exclaimed he, in response to the point-blank invitation: and the colt was his.

The announcement of the end of the contest is received with a cheer.

"If Mr. Lancashire could have seen the face of Miss Redthorne as she coolly made a note of the price in her catalogue, he might have doubted whether his absurd attempt to appear heroic in her sight had been completely successful. The odd smile which flitted across the face of his cousin, Tom Hazeldale, as the applause subsided, would probably have "given him pause" if he had seen it. Dawn did, and said to himself, "He laughs, does he? Why?" After thinking awhile, he murmured, "It's a hundred to one that Michaelmas Daisy is not the best of 'em after all."

The baronet who had come to pick up something for 'cross-country work scanned the next lot with vastly more interest than he had betrayed in any previous occupant of the sale-ring. Tom Hazeldale, too, lost his look of unconcern as the colt was led in.

"You remember this little fellow, Mr. Tom," said Barker to him as he passed. (Barker had occupied an important place in his uncle's establishment.)

"Remember him, Chris? I should think so! Why, he has done better than any of them. How he has thickened, to be sure! He has the dam's plain old-fashioned head."

"Mr. Tom," continued Chris, as he took a position near Hazeldale, after making a circuit of the ring, "not one on 'em's got such quarters, or such legs under 'em as he has. Never mind his head—or his neck."

"You always believed in him, Chris," replied Hazeldale, laughing.

"And I was not the only one, Mr. Tom," rejoined Barker, as he left the spot to make another circuit.

This genial colloquy did not take place unobserved. Dawn marked it, and made his resolves accordingly. If he could not

hear what was said by the pair, he was near enough to draw his own shrewd conclusions from the admiring looks which they bestowed on the new-comer. He (Dawn) would "have a good look in for this customer." Quite the sort of nag to pay his way on the flat, and then, what a jumper he would make! And Ousel thought the colt would suit him, if he went "reasonable:" while Miss Redthorne was manifestly roused. She had noticed how Tom brightened up when "the last of the Whirlwinds" was brought forward for inspection.

"We must be getting on," said the auctioneer, "as there are many other lots to be sold. This useful stamp of colt, as you will find by referring to the catalogue, is another of Whirlwind's sons. There is a blot on the young gentleman's 'scutcheon, but is so slight as to be almost unworthy of mention. His dam's pedigree is unknown; we are obliged, of course, to make that admission; but those of you who knew the dam, and she was pretty well known to the members of the Oakington the last season Mr. Russet was out, need not be told what she was like. I cannot prove it, you know, but I firmly believe that she was thoroughbred. As this is the last of the two-year olds, let me clear up another point. As you are aware, the late Squire was somewhat eccentric. Well, each of the three Whirlwinds you have seen to-day has an important engagement. This youngster, and Mr. Lancashire's purchase, are in the Derby; Mr. Dawn is the possessor of the winner of the Oaks.

"You may laugh, but you will see if I am not a true prophet. The three Whirlwinds are sold at the late Mr. Russet's request, not in accordance with the provisions of his will. In fact, they were not his property, but Miss Redthorne's. I have her permission for making this announcement?"—Grace bowed—"and you will find, if you refer to the well-known office in Old Bury

lington Street, that they were actually entered for the Derby and Oaks in her name. Now, what shall I say for this handsome little fellow ? ”

“ Not so little, Mr. Tom,” observed Barker, *sotto voce*.

“ What shall I say ? ”

“ Fifty,” exclaimed Hazeldale. Surprise upon surprise ! Here was young Hazeldale, with not a penny in the world, actually bidding ! “ A hundred,”—“ two,”—“ three,”—“ four,”—and fifty,”—were additions to the price of the colt, for which Dawn, the baronet, Lord Arable, Ousel, and Lancashire were severally responsible. “ Five hundred ” exclaimed Tom, in a husky voice. “ Six,” answered his cousin. There was no response from Hazeldale to this manifest challenge.

“ Are you all done at six—— ? ” began the auctioneer, after the usual pause. “ Come—— ”

“ Eight hundred guineas,” exclaimed a woman’s sweet voice, the interposition of which drew from the assembly a ringing cheer.

For the first time that day Tom’s eyes met hers, and she blushed. Lancashire with difficulty crushed down the mocking words that lurked about his lips. Without quite knowing how it had been inflicted, or where he was hurt, he staggered mentally under the effect of a blow bestowed conjointly by Grace Redthorne, the girl he had hoped one day to make his wife, and Tom Hazeldale, his, if possible, more than detested cousin.

CHAPTER IV.

HORSE AND FOOT.

AS the company broke up when the sale was over and dispersed their several ways, the startling events of the afternoon furnished abundant material for discussion. Everybody felt as though he had been assisting at the representation of the opening scene in a domestic drama of thrilling interest. The meaning of the final "situation"—to use a stage term—puzzled most of them. Why had Miss Redthorne bought in the colt? Dawn fancied he could shrewdly guess the reason, and Ousel had an idea that he had discovered it, but each of them kept his own counsel. Mr. Lancashire, in no mood for a complaisant conference with Cobnut, left that person in charge of the son of Michaelmas Daisy, and repaired to the railway station to take the next train to town. Tom Hazeldale set out to walk to H—, where he had deposited such of his personal baggage as was not required to be stowed away beforehand on board ship. He must make his way thither in the morning. To-night the walk will do him good.

Communing with his conflicting thoughts, he sped on at a steady pace, totally oblivious of surrounding objects, animate and inanimate. It would have been a comfort to him if he could have said good-bye to Grace, he mused. It was not likely they would ever see each other again, and—after all—she might have liked it too. Ah! well——

"Tom, I am ashamed of you."

"Gracy! where have you sprung from?"

"Oakington. And quite naturally. On horseback, as you observe: attended by my groom."

Hazeldale had been so deeply absorbed in his meditations, he had not heard the patter of her horse's feet.

"Gracy—Miss Redthorne——"

"And why Miss Redthorne, pray? If I do not object to Gracy I am sure you need not, Tom. Am I to-day the desirable heiress, so very different from the poor Miss Redthorne you and I knew a few short months since? You surely have not borrowed your diplomatic cousin's deferential manner?"

"What has he——"

"My guess at the precise nature of your question might not be correct, so I will tell you what he has dared." She paused. "He has made me an offer of his hand and fortune."

"The cad!"

"Your cousin, Tom; your cousin. A deplorable fact perhaps, *but*, a fact."

"You——?"

"Replied to him editorially. Declined his contribution, and—returned it—with thanks. He is not a clever person, Tom. Your uncle left him a farm."

"I know it!"

"I dare say you do. That farm joins another, which your uncle bequeathed me. It occurred to Mr. Lancashire that a marriage—of the farms—was desirable. He might have kept the farm for the postscript; but he did not. He put most of me in there.—And, so Tom," continued she, as she drew up in the bridle-road they had half unconsciously entered, "you are leaving England! Why?"

"To try and pull myself together."

"I think," continued she, speaking in low, earnest tones, "you are doing a wise thing."

It was growing dusk and he could not see her eyes. Had he, his own might have drooped. Hers were bright with unformed tears. "A wise thing."

"Are you glad I am going?"

"Tom!"

"Dear Gracy!"

Unaided, he could not have done it, perhaps, tall as he was. But there she was, leaning over the saddle enfolded in his eager arms. Never until that passionate moment had he dared to dream that she loved him; never, until the prospect of his departure from England stared him grimly in the face, had he known the depth of his love for her. Out of the incoherency of both their too-late explanations emerged the story of their mutual affection. It was sad with its burden of "might have been." Now they must part.

"I have your permission to return, Gracy?" Some inaudible replies are more expressive than words. This was. He knew that he might. "And if I shall have made some progress in——"

"Pulling yourself together."

"Yes, in pulling myself together; and I have prospects, Gracy, how will you answer me?"

"Editorially. 'Accepted with a view to publication.' And now, Tom, let us make a bargain. Go away like a good boy. Work hard. And come back to us (I shall tell papa everything the moment I get home) in time for next year's Derby."

"Agreed. What about the colt?"

"Tom, I bought him for you. And shall take care of him for you, with Bucker's assistance, until you return. You

improvident boy! who gave you permission to spend your remnant of a fortune in two-year-olds?"

Another inaudible observation, followed by, "Gracy, I wish you would add to the gift, by letting Barker do whatever he pleases with the youngster—except sell him, until my return?"

"Very well, Tom, it shall be as you wish. And now, good-by."

Easily and often lightly said, this familiar abbreviation of "God be with you!" but at such a time as this, how intense its meaning! The shiver of the leafless branches in the fitful breeze sounded unspeakably mournful to these two young people as they clung together and whispered the last words they were to hear from each other's lips for many months to come. Then they separated, but not in utter sorrow. Hope had taken up its abode in her heart; Doubt had fled from his

CHAPTER V.

BETWEEN PARTING AND MEETING.

GRACE kept her word. Colonel Redthorne was apprised of her engagement the moment she reached home. She had reckoned with unquestioning confidence on his consent, and he did not disappoint her. He liked Tom, and he had sufficient faith in his affectionate high-principled daughter to feel assured that if she had undertaken to reform the impetuous prodigal all would be well. Moreover, he was man of the world enough to know that Tom Hazeldale's past indiscretions were not such as need be regarded with abiding harshness.

"My darling," said the Colonel to the daughter he worshipped fully loved, "if the young scamp had elected to remain in England, after what has happened, I think I should have said, No. Because it is right of him to go away, on probation, as it were, and so like your good sense, Gracy, to let him go, I heartily say, Yes. I know he will be a good husband, my dear."

"Why, papa?" Grace asked, her beautiful eyes overflowing with glad tears.

"Principally because he will have such an excellent wife. And now, my darling, go to your room and write to him. I will give you a few lines to enclose in your envelope, and we will send Bedford on with the letter to Oakington so as to catch the mail. Your precious Tom will find the joint epistle waiting for him when he goes on board at Falmouth.

Grace kissed her father and fled.

The two letters were soon written and despatched, nevertheless Grace did not obey the summons to dinner with her usual promptitude. Albeit the obstacles thereto had been minute, they were manifold, and occupied time. When the faces you fashion in the fire are loving faces, and the castles you build take the shape of a happy wedded home, it is surprising how swiftly the minutes speed the while your architecture is in progress. Then Grace had found food for pleasant fancies in the perusal of sundry documents of legal aspect, which she disinterred from the innermost recesses of an ancient Japanese cabinet of black-and-gold, and in the perusal—the almost tearful perusal of a letter, in curious cramped character, which had reposed in company with the aforesaid legal documents in the innermost recesses of the aforesaid Japanese mausoleum. There was not a bit of faded riband (it was red tape that kept

the papers together), nor a lock of hair, nor a portrait, nor a ring, nor a suspicion of anything of the kind enfolded in those documents, and yet Grace grasped them in both her hands with ardour and kissed them, saying as she did so—

“ Dear old Tom ! ”

Then she went down to dinner, and found the soup cold, and the fish in a state of disintegration, and her father not angry.

It was one of the worst dinners he had had for a very long time—but how he did enjoy it, to be sure ! Grace’s joy was quieter, but infinitely more intense. The Colonel laughed heartily at her account of the sale, and expressed his entire approval of her purchase, saying, with reference thereto—

“ We can do with Barker very well here. He was a faithful servant to my old friend, Russet, whom he saved many a pound in the matter of horse-doctoring, and I think we may turn him to account in the same way. Although the old fellow never qualified, he is one of the shrewdest vets I ever met with. But concerning this colt ? He is to have the entire management, you say ? ”

Grace nodded.

“ Well, that is what my friend Mr. Weft, of Manchester, would call a large order. I must see Master Barker, and ascertain what his views are of his responsibilities in respect of the two-year-old. If he be reasonable, we shall get on together, if not, I wash my hands of the whole affair.”

As it happened, there was no occasion for him to do anything of the latter kind. Barker came, and he and the colt were comfortably bestowed under the complaisant surveillance of Miss Grace and Colonel Redthorne, the latter of whom, after one serious interview with the custodian of the son of Whirlwind, was content to leave him to manage the young gentleman

as he best pleased. How the time sped at home with the people in whom Tom felt an interest will be gathered from the following letter, which Grace wrote about four months after his departure :—

“ Redthorne Manor.

“ DEAR, DEAR OLD TOM,—How glad I was to get your letter ! You can’t think, you darling, what delight it gave me and papa. I am not a bit disappointed to hear that you have been disappointed, and you must not call me unfeeling for saying so. I believe there is such a thing as luck, of course, but I never believed it had so much to do with those marvellous discoveries of nuggets and diamonds of which we read, as the exercise of dreadful industry—industry is dreadful in such a quest—and a knowledge of geology. Now what do *you* know about geology, Tom ? Yet, I should be proud to wear a diamond of *your* finding Tom, so try again. And when you have found one large enough to look respectable in a ring, leave that horrid Griqualand, and Jagersfontein and the Vaal (dear me ! how I have jumbled them together !) and take an ostrich farm, or something of that kind. Or, you might raise angoras. I was reading the other day about a person who had made quite a fortune out of ostrich feathers and angora something or other—and so you might, dear, for you *do* know something about farming, Tom. Don’t take any of the fevers that attack Europeans in Africa, and remember your promise. And now I will tell you some news.

“ The colt and Barker are going on famously. Papa takes an absorbing interest in both, especially the colt. You will laugh at what I am about to relate. The other day Barker sent a message to me, through my maid, politely requesting an interview in private. I at once obeyed the summons, and saw

him 'in private,' but he was not alone. Mr. Dawn, the owner and trainer, was with him. The latter person lost no time in introducing himself and his business. Since the sale, he said, the contest between Mr. Tom Hazeldale (who was as straightforward a young gentleman as ever broke bread), for a certain colt had never left his thoughts. He had his views about that two-year-old, and he meant to act on 'em when the time came, but would I do him a great favour? I discreetly inquired the nature of the boon which he craved, when he said, 'Miss Redthorne, it is this. Mr. Tom Hazeldale's cousin, Mr. Lancashire, has acted dishonourably to me, and I mean to serve him out if I can.' (What could I say to this Tom? I merely bowed and he proceeded.) 'His colt and my filly were engaged in a Nursery, and there was a good bit of my own money on. Well, he got some information out of one of my lads in a disgraceful manner and—I did not run the filly. I could not make you understand how deeply he has injured me! Oh! I only wish Mr. Tom Hazeldale was here!' (Tom you don't know how I fervently echoed his wish), 'If him and me did not serve the Lancashire school out——'

"I hastened to inform Mr. Dawn that any service which I could render to a friend of Mr. Hazeldale's should be freely bestowed, and hereupon Barker begged leave to explain. 'We'—referring to Mr. Dawn—'think the colt, your colt, Miss, if so be that he have to run in the Derby, should have a little schooling now, and'—at this point Dawn took up the parable—'if you have no objection, Miss Redthorne, I should like to superintend his education. The thing could be managed quietly here, madam. I know Colonel Redthorne and he knows me. They'd never tout a horse on this Manor. If they did I question whether they would survive to tell what they had seen"

His mention of papa's name helped me out of my difficulty. I said if he and Barker satisfied Colonel Redthorne concerning the scheme, I of course should offer no objections to anything they might do. Barker and Dawn left me apparently pleased with the result of their interview. That evening papa informed me at dinner that he had made arrangements with Dawn and Barker, and that I need not trouble further in the matter.

"Touching your cousin, I hear personally nothing. I met him in town on several occasions, but never to interchange more than the common courtesies of life. I read in a paper the other day that he had become the lessee of a theatre in conjunction with Lord Patehouli, whose estate he is nursing. It seems to me that Mr. Charles Lancashire is about the last person in the world whom I should select to nurse anything of anybody else's, least of all an estate. The colt he purchased at your uncle's sale has, in the language of the sporting press, 'proved a flyer.' He has won several nurseries and beaten the winner of the Champagne. Mr. Lancashire has christened him Conqueror in view, it is said (I saw this in print), of the Derby, which he considers is his. The colt is sometimes quoted in the betting—papa drew my attention to it the other day. He is now something like fourth favourite. But, as papa says, there is the winter to get over.

"Before I close this long, and I am afraid you will think dreary epistle, let me tell you that in to-day's *Times* there is a report of a case in one of the Law Courts, in which your cousin figures as plaintiff. I don't understand it, but papa says it is one of those disputes (about bills and gambling debts) which never ought to be settled in public, and for his part he would far sooner be the defendant than the plaintiff."

We will not look over her shoulder and read the last loving paragraph in her letter. It was only intended for his eyes. And those same eyes had had easier tasks set them than deciphering Grace Redthorne's pathetic postscript. The dainty characters seemed blurred, the delicate lines ran into each other. He succeeded better after he had given himself time, but at first it was very very difficult.

In due time there came a reply from Tom. He had found the diamond, and left Griqualand. In partnership with a Welsh farmer of large African experience, he *had* entered upon the cultivation of ostriches and angoras. He enjoyed the ruddiest health, and if Grace were only with him his happiness would be complete. He saw his way to amassing a fortune in the course of a few years, but meanwhile he would keep his promise. She and the Colonel had shown the greatest sagacity in their management of the coit.

CHAPTER VI.

HOME AGAIN.

TOM'S letter, announcing his approaching departure from Africa afforded both Grace and her father great amusement. His views about the country, he said, had undergone a considerable change since he left the diamond diggings (with his one diamond for Grace) in Griqualand. He was convinced that Africa was *the* country for making money, and he knew of no pleasanter way of growing rich than by breeding ostriches and angoras, or growing wine. "If your father, my darling, could taste some of our Cape wines, he would be surprised—" ("I

dare say I should," murmured the Colonel, *sotto voce*)—"at their roundness and bouquet. I must have a serious talk with him and you when I get to the old country—" ("Old country!" exclaimed the Colonel, "the young renegade!")—"about your coming out here to settle—" ("I'll settle him!" continued the commentator)—"so give it your earnest consideration. There is a great future for Africa."

"That is enough. Grace. They are all Columbuses when they have crossed the Bay of Biscay. Do you want to go to Africa and multiply ostrich feathers?"

"No, papa."

"Do I want to go to Africa and ruin an honest English palate with the stuff they call wine?"

"I see no necessity for it."

"And where is the necessity for his going back either? Only wait until I get hold of him. He and his Cape wines! Leave him to me for one evening. Only one. He shall know the meaning for the first time in his life of a well-educated bin!"

There was a curious significance in Grace's smile when her father questioned the necessity of Tom's return to the land of his adoption. Left alone by the Colonel, who closed the interview by making a descent into the cellar, she found herself unconsciously answering his question, with loving amplitude. "Go back again? Never! It was very good of papa to say so, though. There shall be no necessity—if Tom likes."

He was coming home, he said, by an unusual route. A young Dutchman, whose acquaintance he had made in Griqualand was returning with more money than he knew what to do with, and a broken constitution, to spend his last days at Utrecht, his native place. "I found no diamonds," wrote Hazeldale,

"but I kept my health. He is coming home with lots of diamonds, to die. He besought me to accompany him, and I have consented. I will telegraph on my arrival at Hamburg."

Grace would have been better pleased if Tom had chosen the more direct route for his homeward voyage, but she consoled herself with the reflection that the one he had chosen would make but a trifling difference, and after all she did not see how he could have refused the request of his friend. The promised telegram came from Hamburg, announcing his safe arrival. After seeing his friend bestowed in the bosom of his family at Utrecht he would leave at once for Rotterdam, and start by that afternoon's boat for Harwich. Bar accident, he should reach Liverpool Street Station on the following Tuesday morning, the day before the Derby.

Between the week of the race for the Two Thousand Guineas, which "event" was won by a stable-companion of Mr. Lancashire's colt, Conqueror, and the Bath and Harpenden Meetings, there had been occurrences enough of an exciting character, market and other, to clothe the forthcoming Derby with enthralling interest to the inhabitants of the racing world. The son of Whirlwind and Michaelmas Daisy was a hot favourite, and occupied a position at the head of the betting quotations which appeared to defy dislodgment. All through the winter the dark candidate, Mr. T. Hazledale's colt by Whirlwind, dam's pedigree unknown, had been supported at outside prices. Consequent on this, the prophetic authors of the winter circulars had spoken of the youngster with cautious respect. "We must have him on our side," "Not at all unlikely to run into a place," and "Notwithstanding the blot in his pedigree, considered a likely customer to catch the judge's eye," were amongst the oracular observations made by the dead season's guides to the

winner of the Derby. The advance in the estimation of the public of other "likely customers" had, as the season advanced, the natural effect of driving Mr. Hazeldale's champion back in the market, but the colt of doubtful pedigree remained "steady," nevertheless. Regarded in the light of a drama of intensely human interest, as well as equine, it might be said of the Derby in question, that the plot thickened as the hour of Tom's arrival home approached. At such a rate indeed, that Grace said to her father:—

"My darling papa, you must run down to Harwich, and meet dear old Tom."

"Must, Gracy! must?"

"Yes, yes, yes! You know you never refuse me anything."

"But he is surely old enough to take care of himself. What is the use of my going? The boat arrives at Harwich at such a ridiculous hour—three or four, or something."

"Very well, papa; if you will not go, I shall."

"All right, Miss Obstinate, have it as you please. Of course I am going."

Miss Redthorne's anxiety was caused by a letter which she had received that morning from Dawn, informing her of a happily frustrated attempt to "get at" the dark colt. "I have not written to the Colonel," the trainer went on to say, "because I am afraid that he would be of little use to us just now. We want somebody on the spot who is down to their little moves. Since I have had the colt with my string I have put him through the mill, and I am sure it is heaps better business than I thought it. I would give anything to know just now whether he was 'the flower of the flock.' Mr. Tom knows, I am positive. You tell me that he is expected home on Monday. If the Colonel would meet him on his arrival, and wire me the single word 'Yes' I

could get enough money on at a fair price, to swamp the Mr Lancashire school. They have done a lot of the laying, and they would find by the time they reached the Downs that getting out was a ruinous game. The money of the public, on the top of ours, would make our little beauty a rattling favourite. And *do* give him a name. A colt without one never did win the Derby, and never will.

Grace glanced at the sporting intelligence, in that day's paper, and found under the heading of "An attempt at nobbling," a confirmation of Dawn's statement, and elsewhere in the sheet additional cause for alertness on the part of the agents of the Hazeldale champion. "It is rumoured in well-informed quarters that there is a screw loose in the Lancashire stable. We have it on the best authority that Cressit will not leave the mount. Although the horse never was better in his life, he was by no means firm in the market yesterday, and *on dit* that a certain noble lord, who, if the Man in the Street is to be credited, not only owns a few hairs in Conqueror's tail but the owner also, has been telegraphed for. Meanwhile the colt has been removed from the care of Cobnut."

In the cosiest of private sitting-rooms, on the first floor of the Oasis Hotel, behold Miss Grace Redthorne, on the Monday evening before the Derby, busily engaged in writing. A commissioner, cap in hand, deferentially awaits her commands.

"You delivered that note at Messrs. Weatherby's?"

"Yes, madam."

"Then be good enough to leave these at the newspaper offices named on the envelopes."

He gathered up the letters and departed. While he is engaged in presenting Miss Redthorne's compliments to the editor, the Colonel, her most obedient papa, is making himself

as comfortable as the circumstances will admit in one of the carriages of the Great Eastern Railway Company that is being intermittently drawn to the independent port and borough of Harwich. He wots not of a companion in an adjoining compartment, whose presence there, did he know it, would arouse his curiosity. About the same time our old friend Tom is smoking a cigar on the quarter deck of the *Richard Young*, along with an affable member of the British aristocracy, over whom he has, as it happens, an unsuspected advantage. He knows his new friend, but the new friend does not know him. Let us join them. Dutch geography and manners have hitherto engaged their attention, but as they lose sight of the low land at the mouth of the Maas, the conversation takes a new departure.

“ You have been abroad for some time, you say ? ”

“ Yes,” Tom replies, “ more than a year.”

“ Ah ! then I suppose you have lost sight of the great fact that this is the week of the Derby ? ”

“ Well, not exactly,” rejoins Tom, in a deliberate tone ; “ one reason for my return home is a desire to see the Derby.”

“ Really ! Have you anything on ? ”

“ Yes,” replies Tom with an inscrutable smile ; “ a very particular friend of mine has backed one. I hope I shall have a run for my money.”

“ May I inquire the name of your champion ? ”

“ Now, there you beat me. I don’t know. All I do know is that the sire is Whirlwind.”

“ Then it must be Conqueror.”

“ Possibly. At any rate, it is a son of old Whirlwind.”

“ Sir, I congratulate you. I don’t mind telling you that I am part owner of the colt, and that he is going on splendidly.

It may, perhaps, be a comfort to you to know that we mean to try our very best to win."

Tom thanked his informant, and after exchanging with him a few commonplace observations, took the first favourable opportunity which offered itself of parting company with him for the night. He was not quite satisfied in his own mind as to the ingenuousness of his reply to Lord Artichoke's question respecting the name of the colt. But—pshaw! Why should he show his hand, after all? If ever casuistry is excusable, it is in racing matters. He had won an unimportant trick by finessing.

The air was chilly for the time of year, and Tom Hazeldale, after consuming another cigar, turned in. He reappeared on deck next morning in time to see the approach of the boat signalled from "The Cork" to the watchers on shore at Harwich. His fellow-voyager, Lord Artichoke, was yet invisible.

Colonel Redthorne's nocturnal sojourn at Harwich was not enchanting. He felt when it came to an end that he had fully earned the gratitude of his imperious daughter. The idea of engaging a room at the Hotel for a period of some three hours had appeared absurd, therefore, after obtaining spirituous succour there, he returned to the railway station and made friends with its genial custodian, an ancient mariner, who offered him the hospitalities of the office, which he thankfully accepted. He had chatted, smoked, perused all the scripture texts that hung upon the walls, and dozed, for it seemed to him an interminable number of hours when he was summoned back to a sense of everyday existence by the words—

"Here she is, sir. She will be alongside in a quarter of an hour."

He joined a group of not-more-than-half awake custom-

house officers, who awaited the landing of the passengers in the shed devoted to their suspicious reception, and was presently rewarded by the appearance of Tom. Their fervently hearty greetings, including the Major's assurance that Grace was well and impatient to see him, over, the Colonel and Hazeldale withdrew to an untenanted portion of the shed, and the former said—

“Now, Tom, tell me frankly, was our colt the best of the three in that trial?”

“He was. My poor old uncle was too clever. He tried to throw dust into the eyes of Barker and myself, but we were too many for him. He would have told me, I think, but his head went queer, and that cousin of mine meddled, and—you know the rest.”

“Yes, yes—wait a moment.”

To Hazeldale's surprise the Colonel starts off at the double. In furtherance of an arrangement with his host, the night station master, he has handed a message to that obliging official, which will be delivered to Dawn immediately after the opening of the local office. The sole word in that telegram is “Yes.” Returning, he meets Tom, who is coming in search of him.

“Stop, we must not be seen!”

“Why?”

“At least not yet. The train will not start for some time. They are waiting for the Antwerp boat. Come with me.”

Surprised at the invitation, the Colonel accompanies Tom. Two figures approach, evidently in angry altercation with each other. One is Lord Artichoke; the other—Charles Lancashire! It is too late, the latter has seen Colonel Redthorne and Hazeldale. Stepping towards Tom, he says, in a voice that

vibrates with a devilish sneer, "What! Mr. Tom Hazeldale. Has the prodigal returned?"

A look of amused but unspeakably provoking contempt was the only reply that Tom vouchsafed to this splenetic outburst. Colonel Redthorne, manifestly boiling with indignation, was about to say something on his own account to Mr. Lancashire, when Lord Artichoke stepped forward.

At that moment a boy passed with a bundle of damp sheets, and called out, "*Times, Telegraph, Standard and Daily News.* Morning paper, gentlemen?"

"Here, give me one?" said Tom. Obtaining it, he stood awaiting Lord Artichoke's words.

"Have I the honour of addressing Mr. Hazeldale?"

"Such honour as abides in the act is yours, my lord."

"And you knew me, last night, on board the steamer?"

"I did," replied Tom, leisurely unfolding the paper so as to get at the sporting news; "and you did not know me, Lord Artichoke."

"No, sir, or I should not have been so communicative. I must congratulate you on your diplomacy."

"Oh! he is capable——" began Lancashire.

"As to my capabilities you know very little yet. And let me tell you once for all that my loathing objection to you may end in your being pitched neck and crop into the harbour, if you are not quiet. I am talking to your master, sir.—No, Colonel, this is my affair. Permit me——diplomacy, my lord," continued he, again confronting Lord Artichoke with the newspaper folded into a convenient size in his hand, "nothing of the kind. I told you I had backed a son of Whirlwind. I have. You asked me the name of the colt. I said I did not know. That was the truth. I did not. Now,

however, I can give you that information. His name is there."

Lord Artichoke mechanically accepted the newspaper which Hazeldale proffered him and read aloud therefrom:

"We are requested to state that Mr. Hazeldale's colt by Whirlwind, dam's pedigree unknown, has been named *Reprisal*."

"Come, Colonel, there is the bell; good morning, my lord; I hope to have the pleasure of meeting you at Epsom. Take my advice and have something on."

CHAPTER VII.

A SNOWY DERBY.

DAWN'S operations in the country revolutionised the market.

By the time certain active members of "the talent" assembled at their chief resort, halting there for the purpose of learning the latest move on the board before taking the train at Waterloo for Epsom, *Reprisal* had come with a rattle, and it was evident to the old stagers that the efforts of those who were bad against him, to cover their money must soon make him first favourite. The forenoon was devoted by Tom to his darling Grace. The hour of luncheon was upon them before they knew where they were, and when the Colonel told him that if he really meant to see the Woodcote he must put an end to his glowing description of a South African farm, Tom felt hugely inclined to break his word and spend the rest of the day "far from the madding crowd" in the society of the sweetest girl that ever lived. However, as she added her solicitations to the

Colonel's, he, in a state of beatific absence of mind swallowed his food, seated himself by the side of the veteran in a speedy hansom, and remained for some minutes oddly unconscious of a word that was said to him. He was thinking. Somehow the prospect of making a fortune out of ostriches and angoras did not appear so certain in Regent Street as it had seemed in South Africa. Then Grace had dropped some dark hints, the possible meaning of which made his heart beat with unwonted celerity. There was nothing like the dear old country after all. He——

“And now you are in possession of all the facts. Dawn is a consummate tactician, and he could not have a more trustworthy assistant than your own man; but I must say that this bother about Cressit troubles me. Who Dawn will get to ride I have not the least idea. But, here we are. You had better get the tickets and I will secure places.”

As everything which the Colonel said to Hazeldale went in at one ear and out of the other, Tom lured him on to a confidential repetition of the story, which congenial exercise served to profitably occupy their time between Waterloo and the Downs. Once within the paddock he shook off his dreaminess and looked briskly about him. Where was Dawn? Leaving the Colonel in his own box in the stand, Tom sought the trainer in paddock and enclosure, and eventually found him in the latter place.

“I knew you had come, sir,” exclaimed the rapturous trainer, gripping the hand which Tom held out with vice-like fervour, “and *they* know it. Listen.”

Above the complex din, Hazeldale heard the name Reprisal repeated in eager tones by voices of various compass.

“They back nothing else. He will be first favourite to-

morrow, and then we must hedge a bit. Not that there's the least fear. But I like safety. It'll break him, sir, and serve them right. *Who rides?* Why, my own lad, Walton. 'They'll not bustle *him*. The horse knows him, and he knows the horse. They have never been separated since I took the little beauty in hand."

In ten minutes Dawn had imparted to Tom all that was necessary for him to know concerning the preparation and prospects of Reprisal. By way of recompense, Dawn was informed by Hazeldale how Squire Russett, at that time getting rather queer in his head, had mixed up the saddles, leads, and saddle-cloths in the stable, after the trial, and so let his nephew into the secret as to which was the best of the three.

"He thought I blabbed," added Tom, sadly; "but I assure you I did nothing of the sort. I was mixed up with a shady lot at the time, but I never breathed a word to them either about that or the old gentleman's Cesarewitch pot. It was that cad Lancashire."

"It was, was it?"

"Yes. When I did get to know to whom I owed my dismissal, it was too late. The poor old man had lost his head altogether."

"Well, Mr. Tom, revenge is relishing. I have a crow to pluck with the Lancashire school, and you have another. I am very much mistaken if we leave them a feather to fly with after the operation to-morrow afternoon. *How do you stand in the matter of bets?* I think, sir, you may confidently leave that to us—I mean to me. After we have amused ourselves with a bit of hedging and ditching this afternoon, we shall have enough velvet to accommodate the entire confederacy. I say, leave it to us. If it would only rain! There is no fear, as I told you

before ; but the little horse is fond of dirt, and the other one likes to hear his feet. Now——”

“ You want it all your own way,” interposed Tom.

“ I do, sir, I do. They are such a shabby set-out—except Lord Artichoke. He’s straight. I am sorry for him.”

As Colonel Redthorne and Tom Hazeldale left the ring after the winner of the Woodcote had weighed in they exchanged meaning glances. A group of four persons were standing outside the rails engaged in earnest conversation ; earnest and angry. The white face of Charles Lancashire expressed concentrated rage in every line. Lord Artichoke’s calmer countenance was equally expressive of the same feeling, whilst the flushed lineaments of Cobnut, who was violently gesticulating, and the blanker visage of Mr. Stoat, the commissioner of the stable, who stood with his hands thrust deeply into his pockets, contributed each in its characteristic way to the harmony of the picture.

“ Tom,” said the Colonel, when, having passed unobserved, they were fairly out of earshot, “ it strikes me that our friends are having a rather bad quarter of an hour.”

“ Yes,” replied Hazeldale, “ and if all goes well—for us—they will have a good many of those before Mr. Manning says ‘ all right.’ Cobnut seems to have made it up with them.”

“ A hollow truce. I suppose they could not afford to be out with him. He knows too much.”

They were fated to cross the path of their *bete noire*, Lancashire. That night he occupied a box opposite theirs at the Trifle Theatre. Grace was in high spirits, and the Colonel not unduly censorious, considering what an old playgoer he was, while Tom was as delighted with everything as a boy is at his first pantomime. Lancashire left early.

Although the happy party at the Oasis lengthened the day in the festive manner prescribed by Moore it was not necessary for one of them to be called next morning to breakfast. As Tom threw open his window and looked out upon the broad street, that was already unwontedly bright and animated with parties on their way to the Derby, he was made sharply conscious of a change in the weather. He had learnt erewhile to enjoy the bland airs of South Africa.

“Ugh! the wind has chopped round to the north. This is a change, after the blazing weather they had here on Saturday and Sunday. Grace must be careful.”

His lovely solicitude was uncalled for. She appeared at the breakfast-table in a costume that would have seemed becoming in the middle of an old-fashioned winter. They were, of course, going to occupy the Colonel's box, but had, nevertheless, arranged to do the journey to the Downs by road. In addition to her lorgnette, Miss Redthorne had provided herself with a morocco-leather case, similar to those used to contain sheets of music, the necessity for which was not apparent.

“What have you got there, Grace?” inquired the Colonel, “bank notes?”

“Not exactly,” she replied, slightly changing colour, adding eagerly, as though wishing to give the conversation a new departure, “Have you seen the morning papers, Tom? What do the prophets say about Reprisal?”

“Every one of them retains the colt on his side, of course,” replied Hazeldale laughing, “except one, who declares that he does not believe in him, and expects to see him beaten the length of a street. Another courageous prognosticator goes for Reprisal outright.”

"Tom," gravely observed the Colonel, "I shall put my name down as a regular subscriber to that paper."

The weighing of the jockeys engaged to ride in the Derby had gone on quietly from the moment the clerk of the scales took his seat within the extravagantly ventilated cellar kitchen where he held despotic court, without producing any apparent effect on the market. The knowledge that Walton, a jockey whose reputation was negative, was going to ride Reprisal, and that the great artist Cressit would steer Lancashire's colt went for almost nothing in the operations of those backers who crowded to support their respective champions at starting prices. The major part of the work in the shape of investments had been accomplished the day before. Three or four extreme outsiders had advanced in public favour as soon as it became known that they would be run out for places, and a long-suspected "cock" had been finally sent to the right about, but no material alteration had occurred in the respective positions of Reprisal and Conquerer since the night before. If anything, the latter had the call, albeit there appeared every prospect of Dawn's prediction being verified before the fall of the flag. Reprisal's friends increased momentarily at an extraordinary rate, which could not be said of the others.

Meanwhile the weather did not improve. Tom and the Colonel had scarcely seen Grace comfortably bestowed in the box, packed up in rugs and furs as though she were about to start on a sleighing excursion, than the cold driving rain came down in wintry earnest, playing sad havoc with gossamer *toilettes*, and converting the scene of pleasure into one of distress. A wet Derby, can anything be more miserable? The Town Plate was run in a storm of sleet, which was not over when Tom and the Colonel turned their backs on Dawn, after

an interview with him and Walton, and Chris. Barker, and THE HORSE.

"Trained to the minute, Dawn!" ejaculated Hazeldale, when he saw him. "Fit to run for a man's life!"

The Colonel said nothing, but shook Dawn silently by the hand. His feelings were too deep for utterance.

Of the three who sat carefully criticising the preliminary canters, Grace was decidedly the most composed. Her beautiful face was radiant with confidence. Tom and the Colonel believed "he would win, bar accident;" she admitted no such element of doubt as that which is born of the unexpected into her calculations. The going was holding, and that was in his favour, Tom said. She did not care what the going was like—he would win. Her splendid confidence was catching. They came at last to agree with her, and passed remarks of a learned character on the style of moving exhibited by the canterers, as though they had no concern in the race. The sleet was followed by snow, which whitened the roofs of the stands and carriages, and gave the umbrellas which spread over the Downs the appearance of so many mushrooms. It was manifest that some of the horses did not like the weather, but the little horse faced it without blinking. He was one of the last to appear.

"Goes a bit dotty," remarked a sapient critic. "Dotty be d——d," cried another, "he likes it!"

Presently every glass was levelled in the direction of the hollow. A hoarse murmur was followed by a tremendous shout, which spread over the course, mingled with excited cries, as each observer saw, or thought he saw, the changing fortunes of the race.

"Now they're through the bushes, Grace!" cried the Colonel. "Can you see him?"

"Yes, papa, he is in the middle of the ruck."

"He has run through his horses," cried Tom, as they neared the corner. "Hurrah! he's got an inside berth. Now they cross the road, and by Jove there's only two in it, ours and his. Cressit had to go round. Steady, Walton, my lad, steady! Now they draw away, and Cressit uses his whip. Now let him have it, Walton! My—no; he's caught him. It's all over, darling, we've won!"

And Tom, heedless of observers (nobody was looking, for that matter) caught Grace in his arms as Reprisal passed the post a good length in advance of Conqueror.

Grace clapped her hands, as the wave upon wave of sound greeted the victor, led in by Dawn and attended by Tom and the Colonel, as he returned to weigh in. It was a glorious victory.

The bitterness of it to Lancashire she did *not* see. Tom passed him at the door of the weighing-room, when the clerk had said "All right!" He had no words for his crushed rival—no heed for the curse with which Lancashire vainly strove to poison his moment of triumph. The school were "dead broke,"—and that was enough. It had been a hard battle, and he had won.

"Tom," said Grace to the prodigal, when Colonel Redthorne had left the pair together at luncheon, "I have something to say, now it is over. You have won thirty thousand pounds. Wait. Dawn and I managed that. Let me say my say. Your poor dear uncle thought better of you than you think he did. I was in his confidence, you know. He never quite believed that miserable Lancashire, and if he had lived to recover, you would have had no reason to question either his justice or his affection for you. But he thought it well you should be taught a lesson, and he begged me to be the teacher."

"Dear Gracy," was all that Tom could trust himself to say.

“He had set his mind on our marrying, and he would have made that a condition in his will, but I would not allow him. I——”

“You wanted to put me to the test, Gracy dear,” murmured Tom, refreshing himself with a kiss.

“I did. And I have. Now you must have done with racing and—South African farming,” she added, with a tearful smile. “When you have read the papers that are in this case,” and she produced the mysterious article in question, “you will find, I think, that you need not go back to the cultivation of ostrich feathers. All I possess is yours. It was meant for you and——”

That was all. Thereafter the conversation lost coherence. Tom Hazeldale did not return to South Africa. Lancashire’s account was absent from Tattersall’s on the following Monday, but Lord Artichoke subsequently “arranged with the creditors” of the defeated one. Since that snowy Derby the Turf arenas of Great Britain have known him not.

Dawn did win the Oaks with the little filly ! The auctioneer proved a true prophet.

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